

Lawyer asked client to belly dance for him

Disciplinary tribunal issues written warning to him over behaviour

■ **By K.C. VIJAYAN**

A BELLY dancing instructor expected a discussion about a property transaction when her lawyer showed up at her apartment late at night.

After all, that was the reason he gave when he insisted on meeting her at about 11pm in February three years ago.

Instead, the lawyer, Mr Kirpal Singh, checked her Bishan condominium unit to see if she was alone before "cajoling" her to perform a belly dance for him.

Stunned, Ms Lin Ying Ying, who lived alone, rejected his "verbal advances" and complained to the Law Society later.

A disciplinary tribunal appointed by Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong and headed by Senior Counsel Molly Lim took him to task and reprimanded him recently for his unbefitting professional conduct.

In its report released last week, the tribunal also ordered Mr Singh to bear the costs of the proceedings.

Under the law, the tribunal has powers

to fine or reprimand a lawyer. It can also refer a lawyer to be dealt with by a Court of Three Judges, who can suspend or bar a lawyer from practice.

A reprimand – a written warning – is at the lowest end of the punishment the tribunal metes out.

The tribunal heard how the lawyer of 14 years, who runs a sole proprietorship in Club Street, had gone to Ms Lin's apartment, under the pretext of discussing a property deal he was handling for her.

But even before he turned up, he sent her a text message, asking: "U (sic) need anything? I buy wine, food or cigarettes."

Taken aback, Ms Lin declined and told



Lawyer Kirpal Singh was reprimanded for his unbefitting professional conduct. He had gone to a client's home to discuss a property transaction but he asked her to perform a belly dance.

a friend that the text message was "strange" and "scary".

Mr Singh denied he had asked her to perform a belly dance and claimed he went to her home to view the apartment to assess its value for a potential sale.

The text message, he claimed, was sent by mistake. He had actually meant it for his cousin whom he was supposed to meet that night. In fact, his sister was

with him and waiting at the foot of Ms Lin's block when he went up to her home.

But the tribunal found that while Ms Lin had been "firm and unwavering" when she testified during a five-day hearing late last year, Mr Singh was not only untruthful, but offered explanations which were "unbelievable".

The reason he gave for visiting her home was "implausible and unlikely", given that the job of assessing how much the unit was worth belonged to a valuer.

As for the text message, it was consistent with his intention to "make advances" towards Ms Lin, the tribunal said.

Mr Singh's lawyer during the hearing, Mr Ragbir Singh Bajwa, argued that belly dancing is an art that may "not necessarily have sexual connotations".

But the tribunal said: "By asking her to perform a belly dance, (he) had made verbal advances towards her while he was meeting her in his professional capacity."

Mr Singh, through his lawyer Ragbir Singh, yesterday expressed disappointment at the outcome but "wants to let the matter rest and move on".

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