

News

Can you spot the spy cam?

Beware: Innocent-looking items may contain pin-hole cameras

AT FIRST glance, these gadgets appear to be ordinary everyday items such as clocks, watches, pens and remote-control car keys.

But look closely. Hidden within each of them is a tiny camera lens – barely the size of a pin-head.

"It is this feature that gives these devices their name: 'pin-hole cameras'," said Mr Wilson Goh, a manager at Choicecycle, which deals with closed-circuit television equipment at Sim Lim Square.

Yesterday, a former Maybank officer was jailed for a month after using a pen-shaped pin-hole camera to record upskirt videos of three women, who were his colleagues.

The 26-year-old offender is not named to protect the women's identities.

The slim, bespectacled man had secretly installed the device underneath the women's desks to capture shots of their undergarments.

But he was caught on Oct 9, 2009, after one of them returned to her workspace at 10.20am and found him underneath her desk.

He slipped out and rushed off after spotting her.

Found camera under desk

Feeling suspicious, the 28-year-old woman inspected the area underneath her desk and found the camera.

She checked its contents and discovered to her horror that the device had been used to capture videos of her while she was seated at her desk.

The woman immediately informed the police and officers seized the camera.

Police also raided the man's home and took away his computer, which was sent to the Technology Crime Forensic Branch.

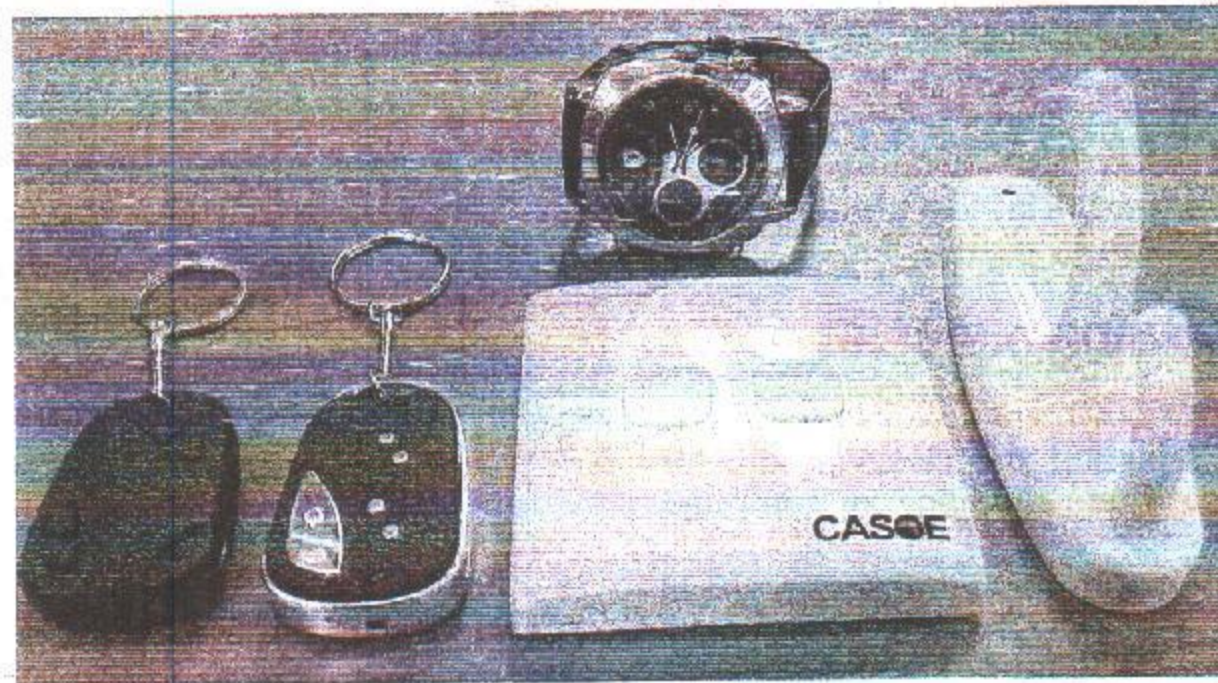
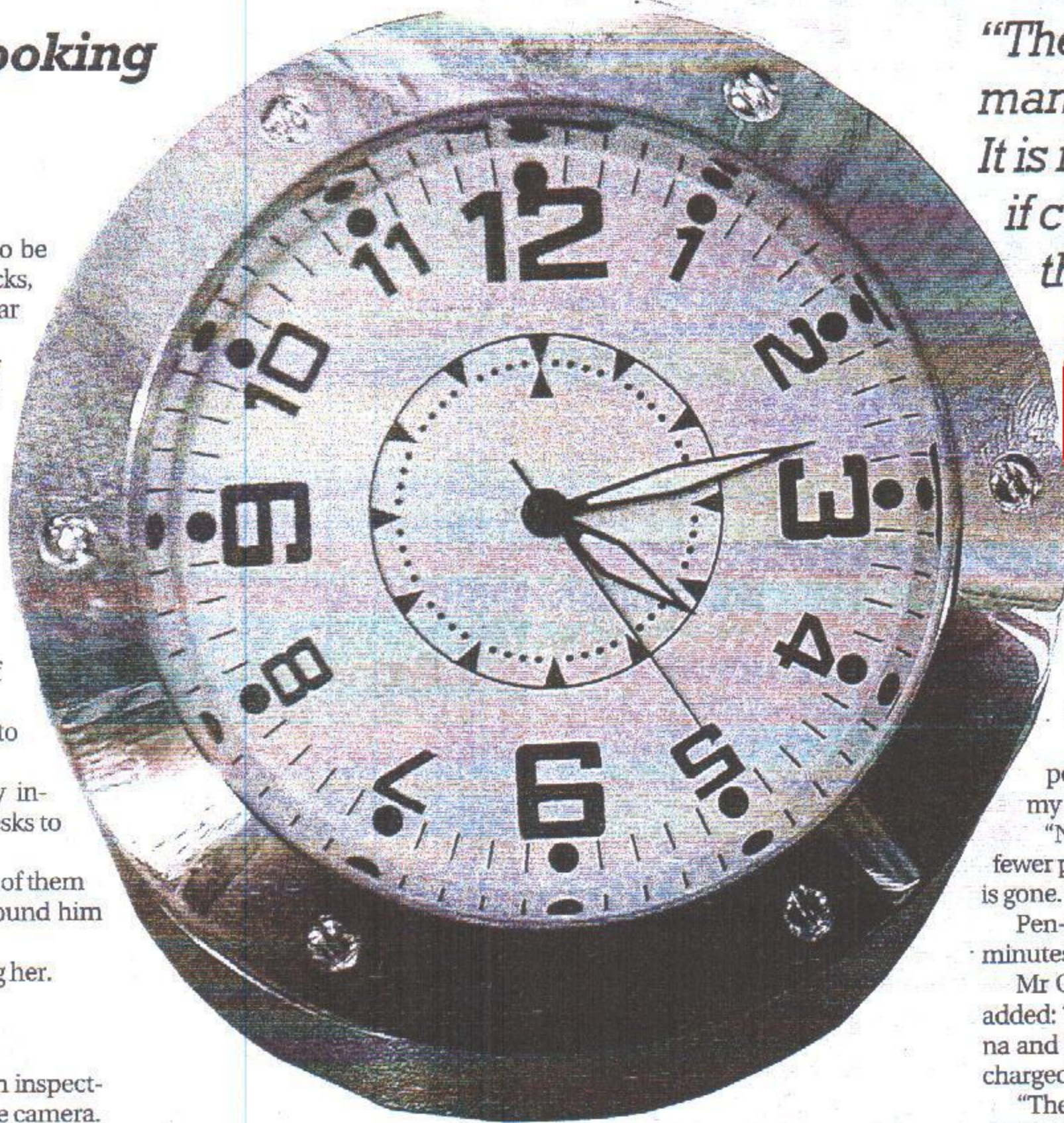
Officers inspected its contents and found 1,069 files of upskirt videos.

The man later admitted that he had installed a pin-hole camera underneath the desk of another colleague, a 24-year-old woman.

The man pleaded guilty in a district court yesterday to two counts of insulting a woman's modesty.

A third similar charge involving yet another colleague was taken into consideration during sentencing.

While the man had used pin-hole cameras to commit crimes, Mr Goh, 30, said his customers use similar



HIDDEN: (Top) The camera is concealed behind the black dot above the figure 12 on the clock. (Above) Pin-hole cameras hidden within watches, remote control car keys, switches and hooks.

"They can be used for many different purposes. It is not within my control if customers want to use them to record upskirt images."

– Mr Wilson Goh, a manager at Choicecycle, which deals with CCTV equipment

devices mostly to spy on errant maids and unfaithful spouses.

He used to sell about 200 pin-hole cameras that look like pens every month last year.

But the demand has since waned and he now sells about 30 pieces a month.

Mr Goh said: "They used to cost up to \$150 per piece in 2010 and yet customers flocked to my shop to buy them.

"Now they cost between \$48 and \$100 each but fewer people are now buying them. I guess the novelty is gone."

Pen-shaped pin-hole cameras can store about 30 minutes of footage.

Mr Goh, who has been in the industry for 10 years, added: "Most pin-hole cameras are imported from China and they have built-in batteries which can be easily charged via USB cables.

"The quality of the videos is quite good, but this depends on how well the subjects are lit."

Mr Goh said that the hottest-selling pin-hole cameras now are shaped like remote control car keys which became available in his store this year.

They cost \$38 each and can record 30 minutes of footage.

"They are popular because they are so cheap," said Mr Goh.

The most expensive pin-hole cameras are those that are built into clocks.

Costing \$280 each, they have built-in motion detectors and can record about three hours of footage.

Mr Goh is aware that pin-hole cameras can sometimes be used for criminal purposes.

"They can be used for many different purposes. It is not within my control if customers want to use them to record upskirt images," he said.

Those convicted of insulting a woman's modesty can be jailed up to a year and fined.