

# Nine-year-old burglar arrested in Ajman

Afghan boy used a corridor window near his family's apartment to gain access to vents

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Ajman: Young, daring and thieving...in a scene straight out of The Young Thief and His Mother from Aesop's fables, a nine-year-old boy was arrested in Ajman last week for climbing up building utility vents - some as high as 15 floors - to steal valuables from apartments.

M.H., an Afghan boy, used a corridor window near his family's apartment to gain access to the vents that led him to his favourite loot - neighbour's laptops and mobile phones - which he then sold cheap, Ajman Police said.

## Never used any tools

Police said M.H. used sewage pipes as his ladder to reach the floors and gained access into the flats through open toilet windows.

"He never used tools or broke anything in the flats he robbed," said Major Ali Jaber Al Shamsi, Deputy Director of Nuaimia Police Station and Head of Criminal Investigation Division.

The boy is not a regular student in any school, though he goes to an Afghan teaching centre.

He was caught by the police after five reports were lodged by two Indians, a Jordanian, a Kenyan and an American - whose apartments were robbed between April and May this year.

M.H. has three brothers and two sisters. His mother is unemployed.

Arif Salah, 15, an Emirati neighbour, said M.H. and his siblings are poorly dressed.

"They hang out in front of the building until after midnight," he said, adding that M.H. once spent three days outside his house following a dispute with his father. "He slept in the vent near the pipes," he said.

In 2009, Salah spotted M.H. jumping out of a first floor balcony with a mobile phone in his hand but he assumed that it was M.H.'s house.

The young thief was arrested after the police team was tipped off about a kid who sold electronics goods and mobile phones at throwaway prices. Major Al Shamsi said M.H.'s family was not aware of his deeds.

"We did not send him to any detention centre; we released him on bail due to his very young age," he added.

### **Extreme danger**

The boy's modus operandi posed extreme danger to himself, Major Al Shamsi said. "Had he slipped and fallen from the 15th floor, he would have died," he added.

Some of the items fell from his hand as he climbed down the pipes and were not sold.

"A broken laptop and a camera were seized from his house," he said, adding that a Pakistani national was arrested for buying the stolen items from the boy.

M.H.'s father works for an engineering firm in Dubai. When M.H. was arrested his father was in Pakistan on business. His mother, in her 40s, said: "We will pay the people [victims of M.H.] and there will be no problem."

Police retrieved several items - after a search of M.H.'s residence and the buyer's shop - including three laptops, a mobile phone, a watch and over Dh4,000 in cash. These will be handed back to their owners, the officer said.