

## Man accused falsely of rape found dead

LONDON: A man accused falsely of raping a schoolgirl has been found dead in a canal, a London court was told on Thursday.

The body of Francis Reynolds was discovered near Manchester Crown Court just hours before the prosecution was due to clear his name.

It is thought that Reynolds, 54, had no idea of this.

The tragedy was disclosed when the prosecution offered no evidence against him.

The judge, Mr Justice Roch, said, "For his memory and for the sake of his relatives who survive him, his good name should be cleared."

He ordered that the girl's rape

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allegations should "have no legal effect".

He was unable to direct not-guilty verdicts because Reynolds was not in court.

Earlier he had been told by Charles Garside, prosecuting, that Reynolds had been due to appear in court two weeks ago but had failed to turn up.

Later it had been learnt that he had been found dead.

The Crown had planned to offer no evidence against him in court. His alleged "victim" had been examined since by a doctor and had been found to be still a virgin. Mr Garside said the girl had made rape accusations also against others.

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