

Acquittal for four prison officers in assault case

By ANGELA LI

FOUR prison officers were acquitted yesterday in an assault case involving two former inmates of the Lai Sun Correctional Institution at Hei Ling Chau.

The four had been suspended, with full pay, pending the outcome of the case.

A Correctional Services Department spokesman said they would be reinstated, but their postings had yet to be decided.

Acting Principal Officer Cheng Siu-kwong, 32, and Assistant Officers II Chu Siu-fai, 21, Lee Tak-ming, 24, and Chau Ming, 29, were acquitted after trial by Deputy Judge Yung in the District Court.

They had faced a joint count of causing grievous

bodily harm, with intent, to inmate Tin Wan-fei, 22. Mr Chu, Mr Cheng and Mr Lee were also jointly charged with assault, occasioning actual bodily harm, on inmate Ma Lam-hoi, 21. The offences were alleged to have taken place in the duty officer's room on April 10 last year.

Mr Lee faced a further count of assault, occasioning actual bodily harm, while Mr Chu faced a count of common assault. The Crown alleged the offences happened in a corridor outside a cell and that Tin was assaulted by Mr Chu, while Ma was attacked by Mr Lee. The defendants denied all charges.

Ma, who was serving 15 months for being an illegal immigrant, testified he was

thumped, kicked and stomped on more than 50 times by officers after he was caught fighting with Tin, a fellow inmate and illegal immigrant. Tin also accused officers of slapping, punching and stomping on him.

Both men have since finished their sentences.

Principal prison officer Leung Kin-ho, the only witness called by the defence, denied having seen any assault on the inmates.

Delivering the verdicts, Deputy Judge Yung said the evidence of Ma and Tin had not been corroborated.

Gerard McCoy represented Mr Cheng, Mr Chu and Mr Lee, while Anthony Yuen represented Mr Chau.

Deputy Judge Yung refused applications for costs.