

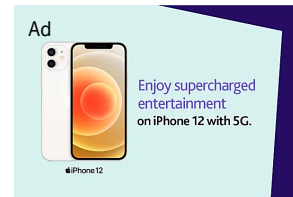
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Zam Zam v Victory dispute: Gangster hired to slash murtabak restaurant worker's face gets 6½ years' jail, caning



Zackeer Abbass Khan (right) allegedly hired Joshua Navindran Surainthiran to slash a rival's face. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE / THE NEW PAPER

Amir
Hussain

SINGAPORE - The owner of Singapore Zam Zam allegedly hired a secret society headman to slash a rival's face, a court heard.

Zackeer Abbass Khan, the owner of the well-known murtabak restaurant in North Bridge Road, had been having a dispute with a neighbouring murtabak restaurant.

He allegedly paid \$2,000 to his business associate Anwer Ambiya Kadir Maideen, who is purportedly a headman of the Sio Ang Koon secret society.

Anwer then allegedly told his secret society member Joshua Navindran Surainthiran to carry out the vicious assault.

It left the victim, Victory Restaurant supervisor Liakath Ali Mohamed Ibrahim, with a permanent scar.

Mr Liakath had a 7cm cut over his right upper lip, which extended to his right cheek, and a part of the cut went through to the inner surface of the lip.



Mr Liakath, who suffered deep cuts to his nose and right upper lip in the attack last year, was left with a permanent scar. The owner of Singapore Zam Zam allegedly ordered the attack on Mr Liakath, the supervisor at rival Victory Restaurant in North Bridge Road. PHOTOS: LIANHE WANBAO

On Tuesday (Nov 29), Joshua, 23, was sentenced to 6½ years' jail and six strokes of the cane for the slashing and other crimes.

He pleaded guilty to five charges: one of causing grievous hurt, two of rioting, and one each of disorderly behaviour and using criminal force against a policewoman.

Five other charges were taken into account in sentencing as part of his plea bargain.

A district court heard that on Aug 22 last year, Mr Liakath, 52, stood outside Victory to tout for customers. He had previously worked for Zam Zam from 1985 to 2004.

When a policeman came by at about 6pm, Mr Liakath said he was touting for customers because staff from Zam Zam were doing so.

Zam Zam staff Koleth Navas, 29, overheard this and an argument broke out between him and Mr Liakath.

The officer told them to stop arguing before leaving.

VICTIM THREATENED

Shortly after, Zackeer, 45, allegedly threatened Mr Liakath in Tamil that he would "do him" within a week, the court heard.

Koleth Navas and Zam Zam's chef supervisor Koleth Abdul Nasir, 41, both also allegedly threatened Mr Liakath.

Zackeer later contacted Anwer, 46, who owns As-Safeera Restaurant at Block 301, Serangoon Avenue 2, the court heard.

Anwer in turn told Joshua that Zackeer had asked for Mr Liakath's face to be slashed, in return for \$2,000.

Joshua got his elder brother Joel Girithiran Surainthiran, 24, allegedly also a Sio Ang Koon secret society member, to help him in the slashing. Joshua also asked his friend Ramge Visvamnathan, 19, to help him act as a lookout.

The next day, Joshua and Joel met Anwer near As-Safeera. The latter showed them a picture of Mr Liakath on his mobile phone.

The brothers then went to Golden Landmark Hotel, near Victory and Zam Zam, to observe Mr Liakath's movements. At about 9.50pm, they saw him walking towards Victoria Street after work and trailed him to Little India MRT Station at Race Course Road. However, they were unable to find an opportunity to spring an attack.

VICTIM'S CAP DEFLECTED KNIFE

On Aug 26, Joshua, Joel and Ramge waited outside Victory. The brothers sat on a bench overlooking the eatery's rear door, while Ramge stayed at the junction of North Bridge Road and Arab Street, where he could view Victory's main entrance.



The owner of Singapore Zam Zam allegedly ordered the attack on Mr Liakath, the supervisor at rival Victory Restaurant in North Bridge Road. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

At about 9.50pm, Joshua and Joel saw Mr Liakath walking along Arab Street towards Rochor Canal Road and Little India MRT station.

They caught up with him at the junction of Rochor Canal Road and Sungei Road. Joshua swung a knife at Mr Liakath's face. Although the weapon was partially deflected by the victim's baseball cap, there were deep cuts to his right nose and right upper lip.

During the attack, Mr Liakath also took out a small fruit knife, which caused a cut on Joshua's left hand.

Joel allegedly kept a lookout. The brothers fled after the slashing.

Mr Liakath called his restaurant manager, who in turn contacted Victory's managing director Abdul Raheem Muhamed, 46. The latter called the police.

At about 12.30am on Aug 27, Anwer deposited \$1,700 into Joshua's bank account, the court heard.

Joshua had earlier received an initial payment of \$200. He told Anwer to keep \$50 for getting him and Joel the job, and \$50 for passing Ramage money to buy ice for the wound on his hand.

Joel, Ramge, Zackeer, Anwer, Koleth Navas and Koleth Abdul Nasir have all been charged with engaging in a conspiracy to cause grievous hurt to Mr Liakath and/or criminal intimidation by threatening to hurt Mr Liakath.

The cases for all six are at a pre-trial stage.

OTHER OFFENCES

Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP) Claire Poh said Joshua had gone on a spree of violence across a period of more than two years, demonstrating "sheer lawlessness".

At about 2.45am on July 2013, Joshua and four friends assaulted two others at Clarke Quay. The five assailants had kicked and punched the victims.

At the time, Joshua was on probation for an offence of causing hurt.

At about 5.30am on Nov 28, 2013, while out on court bail, he also slapped a person at Liang Court.

About 10 minutes later, he pushed a police woman's right shoulder and spat at her face.

While inside a police vehicle at about 6am, he also hurled vulgarities at a policeman.

Out on bail again, and just two weeks before he was scheduled to plead guilty in court to his July 2013 rioting offence, Joshua took part in a gang fight at Liang Court, outside a club called Rumours.

Joshua and five friends belonging to the Sio Ang Koon gang fought with six people from the Ang Soon Tong triad society of the Ji It group on Oct 22, 2014.

Joshua did not show up in court and remained at-large until he was arrested on Sept 21 last year for slashing Mr Liakath.

DPP Poh asked for at least 7½ years' jail and six strokes of the cane, while defence lawyer K Jayakumar Naidu asked for not more than six years' jail and six strokes of the cane.

After passing sentence, District Judge Salina Ishak allowed Joshua to speak with his mother and fiancée before he was taken away to prison. His jail term was backdated to the date of his remand on Sept 23 last year.

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