

Man jailed for punching cabby

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A KTV CLUB supervisor who punched a “grumbling” cabby in the face in a row over what route to take was pointed in the direction of jail yesterday.

Lee Kia Chew, alias Yap Kia Chew, 61, was sentenced to two weeks in jail after pleading guilty to the attack on Mr Kok Lee Long at Hougang Avenue 2.

Mr Kok, 49, picked up Lee and a friend from Pebbles KTV Club off North Bridge Road at 3.30am on July 15, 2012.

They told him to drive to Hougang Avenue 10, then onto Sengkang, Deputy Public Prosecutor Stephanie Koh told the court.

About half an hour later, Lee complained to the driver that he had taken a longer route.

The cabby replied that if he was unhappy, he could complain to the taxi company.

This agitated Lee, who later asked to alight from the taxi so he could get out and hail another cab.

While still in the back seat, he handed over his fare, then began punching the victim in the left side of his face.

Mr Kok tried to grab Lee’s arms, but he kept raining punches at him before his friend – also seated at the back – joined in, hitting the left side of the driver’s body.

The taxi driver managed to seek help from another cabby, and subsequently lodged a police report.

He was given outpatient treatment for an eye injury and seven days of medical leave.

In mitigation, Lee’s lawyer Raphael Louis said Mr Kok had continued to complain to his client – even after he had paid his full fare and a tip.

“He never intended to harm the taxi driver,” he said.

“However, he was unjustifiably provoked and insulted by the taxi driver’s continual grumble against him”

Mr Louis also said the cabby had rejected Lee’s offer of compensation.

Seeking an appropriate jail sentence based on the sentencing benchmark of four weeks in jail, Ms Koh said it was clear that Lee was the aggressor.

“He has reacted entirely disproportionately, and even if the accused perceived some form of provocation from the victim, this alleged provocation would have been merely verbal and wholly insufficient to warrant such a reaction,” she said.

District Judge Imran Abdul Hamid said that in principle, provocative conduct may be considered in overall assessment of the sentence, but added: “I do not believe a departure from the custodial sentence is merited in this case.”

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