

**Pepper spray attack lands two in court  
20 sent to hospital after fumes from ambush spread in shopping centre**

**ILLEGAL: Pepper sprays are banned in Singapore. TNP FILE PICTURE**

**RASH ACT: Seow (below) and Wong (above) had attacked Mr Low with a can of pepper spray. ST PICTURES**

THEY couldn't help interfering in another man's dispute.

And for that, two men ended up on the wrong side of the law after they attacked someone with pepper spray last year.

To make matters worse, the spray also affected others in the vicinity and 20 people, including the victim, ended up in hospital.

One of the two culprits was Seow Min Fu, 41, a businessman, who owned a Buddhist artefacts shop at Golden Landmark Shopping Complex.

The court heard that on 24 Mar last year, one of his employees, Mr Low Hock Seng, 44, told him that he had bumped into a stranger along nearby Sungei Road at about 3pm.

Mr Low and the man, Mr Goh Chin Hock, then got into a dispute. When Mr Low returned to Seow's shop, he complained that he had been assaulted by Mr Goh.

The two of them then went to Sungei Road to look for Mr Goh, 47, to confront him but they did not find him.

About half an hour later, Mr Low and Mr Goh's paths crossed again when the latter went to Golden Landmark to shop.

When he spotted Mr Goh, Mr Low quickly informed Seow.

Seow then went back to his shop and took a can of pepper spray, which he had bought in Thailand that same month.

**Ambush**

He lay in wait at the glass door entrance to the building for Mr Goh.

That was when Wong Tuan Huat, 52, appeared.

Wong, an odd-job labourer, was a regular customer of Seow's.

He saw Seow standing near a flight of stairs and asked him what he was doing there. The latter then related to him the earlier incident involving Mr Low.

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Wong asked Seow if he needed any help but Seow declined his help. At this moment, Mr Goh came out of the building.

Seow stopped him and held the can of pepper spray a few centimetres from his face while spraying at him.

Mr Goh backed away but Seow and Wong cornered him. They then took turns to spray Mr Goh, who used his bag and hands to shield himself.

During the attack, one of them told the other in Mandarin: 'He will definitely collapse.'

After about a minute, Seow and Wong left him and walked back into the building.

By then, the pepper spray had spread into the building and its air ducts, which mix indoor and outdoor air.

Other than Mr Goh, 19 other victims, who were in the vicinity at that time, suffered breathing difficulties, choking, nausea and vomiting.

They were all rushed to Singapore General Hospital for treatment. Mr Goh was also taken there but he refused treatment.

Hazardous materials specialists from the Singapore Civil Defence Force and the Bomb Investigation Division from the police force were activated.

People in the shopping centre were evacuated for fear of a gas leak or a suspected chemical attack.

Seow later threw the can of pepper spray into a canal along Sungei Road. He was arrested at his house the next day.

The can was not recovered.

A police gazette was issued for the arrest of Wong three days later and he was arrested on 4 Jul.

Both Seow and Wong were charged with one count each of voluntarily causing hurt and causing hurt by a rash act which endangers life.

They pleaded guilty to both charges last month.

Yesterday, during their submissions on sentencing, Seow's lawyers, Mr Subhas Anandan and Mr Sunil Sudheesan, asked that minimal weight be placed on the public safety and health effects that Seow had caused.

They told the court that the victims had suffered minor injuries and Seow did not fully appreciate the risks of using the pepper spray.

Wong's lawyer, Mr Kertar Singh, said that Wong was never part of the confrontation and only went to Seow's aid when he saw him in a scuffle with Mr Goh.

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Pepper spray, which contains the corrosive substance phenol, is listed under the Corrosive and Explosive Substances and Offensive Weapons Act.

Seow and Wong will be sentenced on 14 Sep.

For voluntarily causing hurt, they can be jailed seven years and caned.

For causing hurt by a rash act which endangers life, they can be jailed one year and fined \$5,000.