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Loss of nightclub boss of South Bridge Road jailed for threatening dancers to have sex with patrons

Amir Hussain Senior Reporter Yahoo News Singapore 14 December 2018 Follow



Thakkar Hardik Anilkumar was found guilty of seven prostitution related charges under the Women's Charter. (Photo: Getty Images)

They arrived in Singapore to work as dancers at a South Asian themed nightclub near Boat Quay.

But the four Bangladeshi women were shocked to find out that they were expected to do much more than just perform on stage at the club, which caters mainly to a male clientele.

Throughout their employment with Mehfil Entertainment at 67 South Bridge Road, they were repeatedly threatened to have sex with patrons.

The women resisted but were told that their salaries would be withheld and that they would not be allowed to return to Bangladesh. One of them succumbed to the threats, and followed a customer back to a hotel.

When the women finally managed to escape, they were found by policemen frightened and crying.

At the State Courts last Friday (7 December), the boss of the club was convicted of seven prostitution related charges after a trial. Thakkar Hardik Anilkumar, an Indian national, was sentenced to a total of 15 months' jail.

Hardik's brother-in-law Gurmit Singh, the club's assistant manager, was found guilty of two similar counts and jailed for two months. Indian dancer Gill Cherry was convicted of one similar count and jailed for two weeks.

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agreed with the prosecution that there was a high level of exploitation of the victims.

As general manager, Hardik was entrusted by the club's owner to recruit staff and dancers at the club. His brother-in-law Gurmit, who is also an Indian national, assisted him in running the club.

Young female dancers at the club performed on stage to Hindi and Bengali songs. They would be clad in an ethnic South Asian costume. Patrons would show their appreciation by tipping the dancers. The tips and the sale of alcohol were the main sources of revenue for the club.

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The dancers typically came mainly from India or Bangladesh and were employed on a six-month contract. The club provided accommodation, food, and transportation for them.

While employed at the club, the dancers faced severe restrictions. They were not allowed to leave their lodging at Topaz Road without permission, not allowed visitors, and not given a key to the main door. Their passports, work permits and mobile phones were kept from them. They worked continuously every day, and were not paid their salaries in full. They were promised about \$1,618 a month, but Hardik allegedly paid them \$780.

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On 24 November 2014, a week after one of the women arrived in Singapore, Hardik allegedly insisted that she have sex with a patron who had taken a liking to her. She adamantly refused to do so. Six days later, Hardik threatened her, "I will not pay your salary and I will also not send you back to Bangladesh".

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One of the other dancers arrived in Singapore on 7 November 2014. Three weeks later, she was threatened to have sex with a customer. She retreated into the toilet and cried. Afterwards, she tried to complain to her employment agent but to no avail.

In early January 2015, the same dancer was again threatened into having sex with a client who had been throwing money at her while she was dancing. She thought of her family members who were dependent on her earnings, and she caved in to pressure. The client gave the dancer a gold chain and a mobile phone as gifts after the tryst.

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Later that month, Hardik again threatened the same dancer to have sex with a customer. He told Cherry to punish her if she refused.

On 11 and 12 January 2015, he similarly threatened a third dancer twice.

The dancers were adamant that they had not come to Singapore to prostitute themselves. On 13 January 2015, one of the dancers called the police in the morning but there was a breakdown in communication. In the afternoon, they again called police but they were not able to tell their location.

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the victims by his salacious line of questioning during the trial.

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