

**Thaipusam devotee claims assaulted by 20 cops**  
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About 20 policemen had allegedly assaulted a man along Jalan Penang last night, after he attended the Thaipusam festival.

The victim, S Morale 30, from Perak, was present at the police headquarters on Dickens Street today, after a remand order was obtained upon him for four days, until Feb 12.

He is currently being investigated under Section 186 of the Penal Code for obstructing a policeman from executing his duties.

His family members - father K Shammugam and younger brother S Rajee, had already lodged a police report at the Jalan Pattani station at noon today.

Morale, accompanied by his family, and PKR assemblypersons Jason Ong and S Raveentharan, had met Penang police chief Ayub Yaacob (left) in his office.

It is learnt that Ayub gave the group a long lecture but promised to seriously probe into the case.

The Penang chapter of Suaram has submitted a memorandum to Ayub to launch a serious and immediate probe into Morale's allegations.

According to his family, Morale is believed to be "mentally slow".

Rajee, who was with his brother, said the scuffle between Morale and the police occurred about 2am when a man allegedly approached him and seized the can of beer he was drinking.

Morale responded by trying to stop the man from seizing his drink without knowing that the man was from the police force, Rajee added.

The police personnel was later identified as ASP Bathumalai from the state narcotics department.

Rajee said that Morale has asked for the identification of the man who approached him, to confirm if indeed he was from the police.

"Then a group of 20 or so policeman appeared and dragged him to a back lane along Penang road and beat him up. He was kicked and punched," said Rajee.

"Morale is asthmatic, has difficulties in breathing and suffers from chest pains," he added.

Morale sent to hospital

Ong, who is Kebun Bunga assemblyperson, said Morale had been sent to the hospital for medical attention.

"We are not blaming the police but we want a thorough investigation into the case. The force must carry out this probe professionally although it concerns their own officers," he told Malaysiakini when contacted.

Raveentharan (right in photo, with Ong), who is Batu Uban assemblyperson, said the police can impose reasonable force but only when necessary, for example, during arrest.

"Other than that, the force has the power to arrest, probe and charge a person, but not assault him or her physically. This would amount to a gross abuse of power," he said.

"There is no law against drinking, so we are questioning why the police had to seize Morale's beer can," he added.

Yesterday, during a press conference, Ayub praised Malaysians for being tolerant of each others cultures, saying the three big festivals - Prophet's Birthday, Chap Goh Meh and Thaipusam had went well without major hitches.

He said the force had deployed 2,000 police personnel to monitor the festivals.

He reported that there was only four cases of robbery with three of them resolved by the arrest of two suspects.

During the Thaipusam event which started on Tuesday, Ayub said that the police had managed to seize six parangs and five knives.

"It is good that the organisers have prohibited the sale of alcohol because in the past, this had led to serious problems involving violence," he told reporters.

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