

Guan Eng's offer of help rejected

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By Susan Loone

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has offered to provide legal assistance to the senior citizen detained by police at the Penang International Airport for carrying mementos related to the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM).

However, in an immediate response to Malaysiakini, the 66-year-old retiree declined the offer, saying "there is no need".

"I was not charged with any crime so the need does not arise," he said under condition that he is not named.

The man said he wanted to clarify that he was not released on police bail as reported by some of the media.

He said he merely gave a "normal, routine" statement to the Bayan Baru police yesterday and was now waiting further action.

On Tuesday, he was held for questioning, along with a 59-year-old friend from Hong Kong, about 10.30pm after arriving at the airport in Bayan Lepas on a Thai Airways flight.

Police were tipped off

After getting a tip-off, a group of policemen waited at the airport to nab the man and his companion, while only selected press were told to cover the incident.

State police chief Abdul Rahim Hanafi said the duo would be investigated under the Printing Presses and Publications Act for having in their possession eight CDs, 11 souvenirs and 12 books related to Chin Peng and the now defunct CPM.

The pair had acquired the materials when attending Chin Peng's wake and funeral at the Wat Tat Thong Buddhist temple in Bangkok's Ekkamai district, which was held from Sept 20 to 23.

The former CPM secretary-general, whose real name was Ong Boon Hua, died on Malaysia Day, Sept 16, after a prolonged illness.

The retiree, who is related to a former parliamentarian from the Penang BN, said there were many errors in media reports that he wanted to clarify.

For one, he said, police were still holding the materials he brought in from Bangkok, contrary to reports that said the materials were returned to him after he gave his statement.

"They are all being held by police. I was told that after one month, I can apply to the Home Ministry to get them back," he added.

Another point he wanted to clarify was on media reports that police also seized a green hat sporting a single red star from him.

"That is not true. It is a dark blue hat that I got from Vietnam a few years back. It is a tourist item, nothing more," he said.

The Malaysian authorities have warned that they will come down hard on anyone who carries Chin Peng's remains or ashes into the country for burial at his home town in Sitiawan, Perak.

Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar also warned that stern action would be taken against anyone planning to revive communism by distributing materials related to the CPM.

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