

DAP exco man freed after night in lock-up

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Penang exco member Phee Boon Poh was released by police this evening after having spent a night in a police lock-up for his role as the head of state-funded Voluntary Patrol Unit (PPS).

A total of 134 more PPS members will be released by midnight, lawyer Gobind Singh Deo said this afternoon.

Gobind said the documentation was being done to secure the release of the members.

He was accompanied by 21 lawyers from DAP, PKR and the Bar Council's Legal Aid Centre and they managed to get into a sessions court set up for the matter at the Northeast District police headquarters on Jalan Patani about 12.30pm today.

"The police applied to remand them for four days, but since they needed to prepare the documentation, the detainees will be released, temporarily, on police bail today.

"The sessions court judge heard the application by the detainees to seek their release," Gobind said.

However, the lawyers were not informed about the actual reason for the remand.

Sessions judge Mohamad Izwan presided over the matter, while police officer ASP Karuna applied for the remand.

The lawyers came out about 3pm and were greeted by supporters who clapped happily upon hearing about the pending release of the detainees.

Exact charge yet to be specified

According to Gobind, the detainees are being investigated under Section 43 of the 1966 Societies Act, but the exact charge is yet to be specified.

Earlier, 21 PPS members - seven women and 14 senior citizens over the age 60 - were released on police bail, after Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng negotiated with the police for their release last night.

The lawyers and supporters, including PAS central committee members and Parit Buntar MP Mujahid Yusof Rawa, PSM's Choo Chon Kai were among the crowd, with some waiting outside the gates of the police headquarters since 9am.

Mujahid sponsored several bundles of buns for the detainees, while another supporter donated boxes of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Meanwhile, state police chief Abdul Rahim Hanafi (left) said the force would continue to detain PPS members as the organisation has been declared illegal by Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar.

"It is an ongoing operation," Abdul Rahim told a press conference at the state police headquarters today. "Out of 156 members, 11 have criminal records."

Last night, PAS deputy president Mohamed Sabu came to show his support, together with Kubang Rotan assemblyperson Mohd Nasir Mustafa.

Mohamed, better known as Mat Sabu, said police acted unfairly in their mass arrest of the PPS members, whose main activities include urgent response to disasters, accidents and community service to members of the public.

"Those pro-Umno and Perkasa members who barged into the Penang legislative assembly on May 21 were not arrested immediately, like they did to the PPS members," Mat Sabu said.

"It was Merdeka yesterday. The police should have waited, discuss the matter with the state government first before arresting them like this," he added.