

Fiancee: Uthayakumar very ill
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Detained Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leader P Uthayakumar has taken ill again and would undergo medical tests at the hospital today.
MCPX

uthayakumar 051207His fiancee S Indra Devi, 36, who visited him at the Kamunting Detention Centre in Taiping yesterday, said her husband suffered heart problems and severe skin allergy for the past few days.

"His diabetic level is also high," she said.

Uthayakumar's condition is reportedly stable after being treated by doctors at the centre.

hindraf supporters kamunting prison protest 280408 09She said Kamunting authorities had assured her that her husband would be taken to the hospital for further medical tests.

"We demand the authorities to provide the best medical care to protect his health," she told Malaysiakini when met outside the detention camp, where about 2,000-odd Hindraf supporters from all over the country gathered to call on the government to release all five Hindraf leaders held under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Besides Uthayakumar, the others are M Manoharan, R Kenghadharan, V Ganabatirau and T Vasantha Kumar.

The five were arrested on Dec 13 last after organising a mammoth rally in Kuala Lumpur on Nov 25 against perceived marginalisation and discrimination of Malaysians of Indian origin.

Uthayakumar's failing health has become a contentious subject for several human rights groups and social activists in recent days.

Various NGOs and politicians have condemned the camp authorities for allegedly failing to attend to Uthayakumar's deteriorating health condition over the past month.

'Callous treatment'

Social reform group Aliran described it as "callous treatment of a human being."

Its president P Ramakrishnan said it was hard to believe and unacceptable that in a country that had exalted the virtues of Islam Hadhari could be so callous in the treatment of a human being.

"As a result of this gross negligence and wanton cruelty, Uthayakumar had fallen ill and had to be hospitalized," he said.

The Kamunting authorities, he said, had shirked their responsibility for the welfare of a detainee under their care.

"As a human, he is entitled to receive medical attention like any other Malaysian," he added.

Indra Devi's statement refuted claims by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) commissioner N Siva Subramaniam that Uthayakumar was being put under good medicare at the camp.

"It was not true that he had been denied medicine for diabetes over the past month despite repeated requests to the director of the Kamunting camp," said Siva Subramaniam.

hindraf supporters kamunting prison protest 280408 08However, in an open statement sent to Hindraf or now popularly known as Makkal Sakti, the movement's self-exiled chairperson P Waythamoorthy accused Siva Subramaniam and his team of lying..

"How could Sivasubramaniam be satisfied with the medication given to Uthayakumar when he had never interviewed my brother?" said Waythamoorthy in an online posting.

Losing steam

Makkal Sakti supporters, who held the gathering, later converged for a prayer session for their leaders at a Hindu temple in Taiping.

While calls from various groups for the release of the Hindraf five and other ISA detainees - estimated to be 80 at present - have gained pace over the past few months, the fire among Makkal Sakti supporters seems to be dying.

Yesterday's gathering was more of a subdued affair than a fiery protest, which has been synonymous with Hindraf activities for the past two years to secure the freedom of their leaders.

This could have been due to fatigue, loss of interest after the election euphoria or poor organising by the coordinators.

Whatever the reason, the lack of enthusiasm was evident and the passion expressed by Makkal Sakti activists in front of the detention camp was not one to savour.

An estimated 500-car Makkal Sakti convoy from all over the country started to throng near the detention camp at about 2.30pm.

hindraf supporters kamunting prison protest 280408 01A small group of activists held a banner calling for the release of their leaders while others were mainly passive on-lookers.

Several Makkal Sakti supporters held up portraits of the five Hindraf leaders, and that of Mahatma Gandhi. They chanted 'Makkal Sakti' and 'Release Our Leaders.'

The gathering, which apparently was carried out without a police permit, did not last long.

Point made

The crowd lost its momentum when Makkal Sakti coordinator RS Thanenthiran arrived at 3pm and told them to depart from the scene to a Hindu temple in Taiping, the Arulmigu

Balathandayuthabani Alayam near Maxwell Hill.

Thanenthiran and his supporters were also warned by Deputy Taiping OCPD Supt Syed Wahab Syed Majid that "the demonstrators could be forcibly evicted if necessary."

"This is illegal assembly. You all are ought not to be here," he told Thanenthiran.

hindraf supporters kamunting prison protest 280408 03Syed Wahab later told Malaysiakini that the warning was given because he did not want any untoward incidents to happen near the detention camp.

Despite Syed Wahab's warning and pleas by Thanenthiran and one of his deputies, MN Anbalagan, several Makkal Sakti supporters appeared reluctant to move.

Finally by 4pm the crowd dispersed under the watchful eyes of about 200-odd police and the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) personnel.

Thanenthiran said later that the assembly was organised to compel the federal government to release the five Hindraf leaders.

"We have made our point with our massive presence today.

"We will go to the temple to pray for divine intervention to secure the freedom of our leaders," he told the supporters.

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