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THREAD: Tangaraju Suppiah faces execution next Wednesday because he was found guilty of conspiring to traffic a kilo of cannabis that he never saw or touched. His case is riddled with so many problems, it is a searing indictment of Singapore's destructive drug policy.

Months after he was arrested for failing to turn up for a urine drug test, Tangaraju (Appu) was investigated in relation to the events surrounding the cannabis that another man, Mogan, had been found with in September 2013.

The police interrogated him for a capital offence without the presence of a lawyer or a Tamil interpreter. During his trial, Appu testified that he had repeatedly requested for the assistance of an interpreter during the recording of his first statement, and this was denied.

He said he did not fully understand the Inspector's questions, nor parts of the recorded statement when it was read back to him.

In his judgment, High Court Judge Hoo Sheau Peng explained that he did not put any weight in this because, "...I found rather disingenuous given the accused's admission that he had made no such request for any of the other statements subsequently recorded from him."

When I read the judgment, I found the judge's reasoning utterly baffling, as someone who has been investigated by the police before on multiple occasions for my political activism.

English is my first language, I'm university-educated, I have friends who are lawyers, and a decent understanding of my rights under the law, and yet, I have found police interrogations intimidating, daunting and exhausting.

In every instance in which I have been interrogated by the police, the statement they read back to me sounded nothing like me, because they have no obligation to record statements verbatim. Statements taken by the police are also often riddled with grammatical and other errors.

It boggles my mind that even journalists are obliged to quote interviewees word-for-word, but not the police. Police officers have repeatedly twisted and embellished my words in their statements.

Sometimes, I've asked them to amend it and been met with resistance. Once, a police officer scolded me for my request to make amendments, saying it's very inconvenient for her because she and I would have to sign against each change, or re-print the statement.

She even tried to persuade me that a response she had written down was what I had said, though I was certain I would have never said that.

At other times, I've just not had the energy to advocate for myself and get the statement changed. After 4 hours of questioning, you just want it to end. So I'll admit, I've signed off on statements just to get out of there.

It is difficult to overstate the power differential between an investigating officer and a man in Appu's position.

Appu was being investigated for a capital charge, he was imprisoned at the time of his investigation, he hasn't had meaningful access to education, and isn't proficient in English, the language the officers were speaking to him in.

What's more, Appu had been conditioned, for around three decades of his life, to submit to police and prison authority.

When he made repeated requests for a Tamil interpreter during his first statement-taking and was denied, it makes perfect sense that he would give up and be resigned to going through the rest of his interrogations without an interpreter.

If anyone were to put themselves in Appu's shoes for a second, I don't think it is difficult to understand that he would've stopped asking for an interpreter, not because he didn't need one, but because he had given up on the idea that his needs would be met.

Leela's greatest regret is that Appu didn't take the plea bargain that the prosecution offered him, before the case went to trial. According to his family, Appu was first offered 20 years, then 15 years, and finally, 12 years.

He turned down all these offers because he believed he could prove his innocence in court. Appu didn't see or touch the cannabis. He didn't pay or receive any money for it. There was no evidence that he placed an order for it.

So I can understand why Appu was sure he would be acquitted. Appu didn't believe that just because there were some calls between two others - Mogan and Suresh - and some phone numbers the prosecution said belonged to him, he could be convicted of trafficking and hanged.

The mobile phones tied to the numbers were never even recovered for analysis. Appu maintained that one of the numbers was not his, and the other, he had lost. Despite all this, on very thin, circumstantial evidence, Appu was found guilty and given the mandatory death penalty.

Mogan, who is the man who was caught with the 1017.9g of cannabis, was only charged with trafficking 499.99g of cannabis and received 23 years in jail and 15 strokes of the cane.

Appu, on the other hand, was charged with conspiring to traffic the full amount of 1017.9 grams, despite there being no evidence that he knew the quantity of drugs that were being transported.

Mogan's girlfriend, who was with Mogan in the car with the drugs, was given a discharge not amounting to acquittal.

Suresh and Shashi, two others involved in the incident, were charged with conspiracy with unknown persons to traffic in cannabis, were also given discharges not amounting to acquittal.

From the position of any ordinary person, and especially for Appu's family, it is so difficult to understand or accept these decisions, and their consequences. It feels shockingly arbitrary and unjust.

If Appu had taken the plea bargain, he would have been a free man in three years. But because he decided to fight the charges against him, he faces the noose next week.

"My brother deserves to have his case reviewed fully by the supreme court – they have to relook at his conviction. He didn't get justice," Leela beseeches.