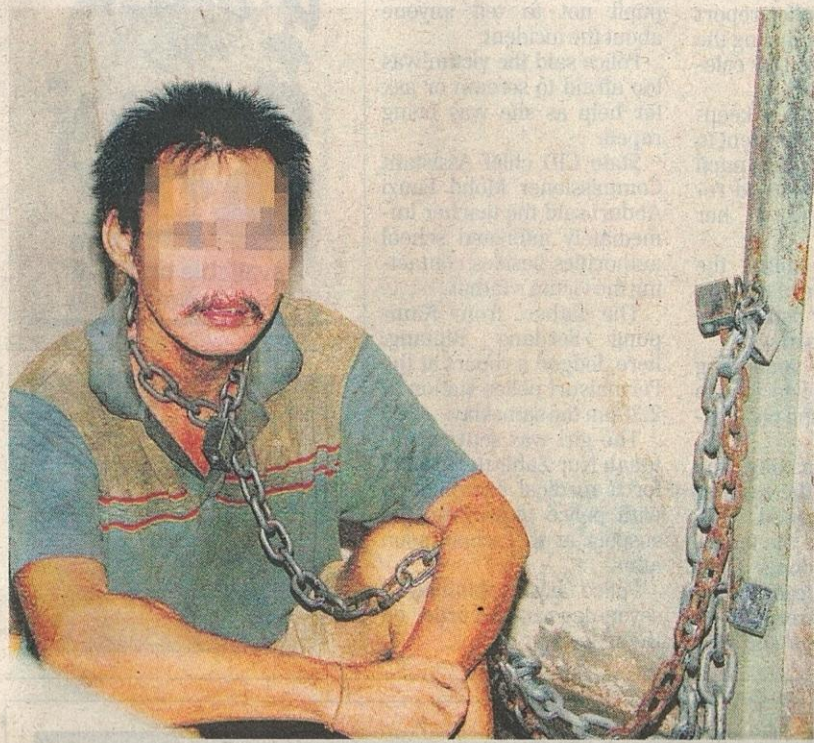


28/03/04 m/s 10

Ah Longs' hostages rescued

Three chained to walls in unoccupied shoplot for 2 months because of unpaid debts



The three men who were held captive by loan sharks after they failed to repay their loans.

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KUALA LUMPUR: Police rescued three men who were chained like dogs, beaten and forced to survive on bread and water in yet another case of shocking treatment inflicted by loan sharks on their debtors.

The three men were held in an unoccupied shoplot in Seri Kembangan, near here, for two months as they could not repay their loans which ranged from RM1,500 to RM4,000.

A police party raided the shoplot yesterday afternoon and found the three men tied to the wall with heavy chains.

The victims, aged 25, 34 and 49, were abducted from Segambut, Semenyih and Gombak.

Gombak police chief Assistant Commissioner Abdul Rahim Abdullah said police were led to the shoplot by two loan sharks who were arrested in Kepong yesterday.

"The victims were very weak. They were given medical attention immediately.

"They were wearing the same clothes they had on for the past two months and had been beaten regularly with sticks.

"The loan sharks contacted the victims' families and demanded they settle the loans if they wanted to see their loved ones again."

The families could not raise the money but did not seek police help.

Another victim, who was held captive for 17 days, tipped off the police after his family had paid off his debts and he was released.

The man, who had taken a RM400 loan, provided information that led to the arrests of the two loan sharks outside a bank in Kepong yesterday.

The two men then led police to the other three captives.

Rahim said the victims were imprisoned in two makeshift six-by-seven metre cells, each with an open toilet. They were chained at their necks and feet

to a wall.

Firemen used an electric chainsaw to cut the 6kg chains.

The captives sobbed uncontrollably when they saw the rescue party.

One of them, identified only as Ling, said he had borrowed RM1,500 from an Ah Long earlier this year. He was given a month to repay the loan.

"By last month, I had settled RM700. I asked for an extension to settle the balance but they refused.

"They took me away and locked me up, saying they would only release me when my family had settled my debt.

"As my family did not know I took a loan from the loan sharks, I was locked up here for two months."

He said they were only given five slices of bread every few days and water from a small tap connected to their cells.

"If we made noise, we would be kicked and beaten."

The other two victims who were imprisoned in the cell opposite Ling's refused to



One of the three men leaving his 'prison' yesterday with the help of a policeman and a medical officer.

comment.

Police believe the two loan sharks in custody are part of a syndicate and did not rule out the possibility that more may be suffering the same fate.

"We are now trying to trace

the other members of the syndicate," Rahim said.

The case is being investigated for hostage-taking, a charge which carries a jail sentence of between seven and 30 years upon conviction.