

Phey Yew Kok faces 28 new charges

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Former NTUC president and Member of Parliament Phey Yew Kok was yesterday charged with 28 new offences – nearly all of which pertain to when he was one of Singapore's most powerful unionists in the 1970s.

A fugitive from justice for over three decades before surrendering last month, the 81-year-old now faces a total of 34 charges involving

more than \$450,000 – nearly five times the \$100,000 in union funds he was originally charged with misappropriating in 1979.

The fresh charges mostly involve criminal breach of trust, but also include abetting the fabrication of evidence, abetting the provision of false information to a public servant, and misappropriating more than \$200,000 in supermarket goods.

It is also alleged that he spirited money from the International Metalworkers Federation and Boon

Teck Education Centre, and even a donation of about \$17,700 intended for the Industrial Accident Relief Fund. The new charges also include one of absconding while on \$100,000 bail.

He had been scheduled to return to court on Jan 7, 1980, after being first charged the month before, but

on New Year's Eve, he took a train to Kuala Lumpur, then went to Bangkok. Nothing more was known of him – until he unexpectedly gave himself up at the Singapore Embas-

sy in Bangkok on June 22.

The silver-haired Phey appeared in court yesterday through a video link to hear the new charges. He is currently in remand at Changi Prison, where he is expected to remain at least until his case is heard in court on Sept 3.

No bail was offered. He was represented by lawyers from Tan Rajah & Cheah – senior counsel Chelva Retnam Rajah, partner Chen Chee Yen and associate Andre Teo.

Mr Chen said that they were en-

gaged by Phey himself, but declined to say when. He added that they had yet to meet their client but would see him soon.

Phey enjoyed a meteoric rise in the labour movement after joining the National Trades Union Congress as an industrial relations officer in 1964. Six years later, he was appointed NTUC president at the age of 35. He was elected MP for Boon Teck constituency in 1972.

But after a Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau probe, he was arrested and then charged on Dec 10, 1979. The earlier charges include misappropriating two cheques – for \$40,000 and \$25,000 – in 1975 while he was general secretary of

the Singapore Industrial Labour Organisation (Silo). In September 1978, he also allegedly used almost \$18,000 of Silo's funds to buy shares in a private supermarket without ministerial approval, breaching the Trade Unions Act.

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