

Said Zahari: Be positive about May 13 book
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Malaysians of all races must read the latest book on the May 13 riots with an open mind and positive attitude, according to former Utusan Melayu editor-in-chief Said Zahari.

He said the 'May 13' riots in 1969 is a historical reality and mature people should not be afraid to face up to history.

"There are certainly lessons to be learned by all sides. But before correct lessons can be learned, there must first be correct facts. Otherwise, we would be learning the wrong lessons," he added.

Said has yet to read the book, titled 'May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969'. However, he said its author Dr Kua Kia Soong is a "progressive and rational intellectual".

This is why, he added, he allowed his poem to be included in the book.

"When I came to know about what happened in Kuala Lumpur on May 13, 1969 and could not do anything inside Singapore's detention centre, I penned the poem 'Hidden Hands' to express my sorrow and grief," he said.

Said was detained without trial for 17 years in Singapore from 1963-1979 for allegedly being a 'communist' and later an 'Indonesian agent'.

'Negative influences'

"Those who have read the book and think that they have other facts and interpretations should present them rationally with the right intention to find out the truth and contribute to national reconciliation, but those who have not read the book should read it first before they give their opinions," he added.

Yesterday, there were calls for the book to be banned and action taken against its author. It was also reported that internal security ministry officials had seized several copies of the book from the MPH bookstore in the MidValley Shopping Mall in Kuala Lumpur.

The book was launched last Sunday at the Kuala Lumpur-Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall.

Said also pointed out: "The correct intention of writing or reading history books is not to re-open old wounds or take revenge but to learn fact-based lessons with the view of not repeating mistakes and errors."

He said Malaysian and Singaporean societies are multi-ethnic and "vulnerable" to "negative influences" from other parts of the world.

Therefore, he said, it is important for people of different ethnic communities to develop a stronger sense of mutual understanding, empathy and solidarity based on truth, justice, fairness and inclusiveness.

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