

Don't demonise May 13 book
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I refer to the malaysiakini report Ministry seizes controversial May 13 book.

The action by some officials of the Internal Security Ministry in confiscating the book 'May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969' on suspicion that it is an undesirable publication should be condemned by all Malaysians.

This act of censorship bears the hallmark of an authoritarian, insecure and hypocritical system which paints the picture of a free and democratic Malaysian society for the outside world whilst actively engaging in suppression of basic rights, including the freedom to information.

This ill-advised measure is revealing of the desperation by certain groups within the government to suppress any other analysis of the May 13 racial riots except that which is in conformity with the distorted official version. Perhaps, various Umno politicians are not to be blamed for responsibility for the riots. Perhaps, it is other parties or other individuals.

Judgment on May 13 needs to be made with the fullest possible information on what happened and incorporating the views of those affected by this tragic event as well as independent observers.

Dr Kua Kia Soong's book is a praiseworthy attempt to provide a scholarly and independent analysis of this important watershed in our country's history. Instead of banning the book, the government should welcome it in its effort to provide Malaysians with a more accurate picture of what happened during May 13 and the aftermath.

Supporters of the government, especially those from the academic community, have the right to be critical of the book and to point out its flaws. Engage with it in public with facts and arguments but don't demonise or ban it. Let us get at the truth not through concealment or falsification but through transparency and accountability, two principles which the prime minister has publicly endorsed.

I am sure there are individuals and parties with integrity within the government that are aware of the importance and positive value of the book. I call on them to take a public stand and speak out against this illegal act of confiscation and possible banning of the book.

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