

'May 13' to cross the causeway
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Singaporeans have indicated a 'high level of interest' for the controversial May 13 book, according to a well-known book distributor in the city-state.

Horizon Books spokesperson John Francis said his company has just placed its first order of 500 copies for the first reprint of 'May 13 – Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969' because the first print of 1,000 copies had already been sold out in Malaysia two days after the launch.

According to Francis, the Singaporean reading public had known about the book from Malaysia's alternative media and blogs even before the mainstream media in both countries reported about it.

"The reported seizure or possible ban of the book has certainly generated an even higher level of interest here in Singapore," he said.

"I don't foresee the sale of the book will get into any trouble in Singapore," he added.

Horizon Books, which maintains an office in Kuala Lumpur, is also the distributor in Malaysia of the Singapore-published 'Chin Peng: My Side of History' as well as 'Faces of Courage' and 'Ousted!'.

Books seized

A Singaporean academic told malaysiakini that the high interest was "understandable" as both countries are close geographically and there are many Singaporeans who are ex-Malaysians or have family members and close relatives across the Causeway.

The sale of the book however ran into problems with the authorities in Malaysia after officials from the Internal Security Ministry seized copies of the book from the MPH bookstore in Kuala Lumpur.

Che Din Yusof, secretary of the Publications and AI-Quran Texts Control Department at the ministry told malaysiakini yesterday that while the book was not banned, the sale of it was nevertheless prohibited.

The books were confiscated on suspicion of being an "undesirable publication" as defined by Section 7 of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.

The act empowers the minister to ban any publication which is "prejudicial to or likely to be prejudicial to public order, morality, security, the relationship with any foreign country or government, or which is likely to alarm public opinion".

At present, Che Din said that no decision has been made as to whether the book should be banned.

"We can finish reading the book in a day and decide whether it should be banned.

"However, it will take us two to three days to write a report to the minister or his deputy who will then sign the (ban) order and gazette it (the decision, if any)," he said.

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