

**Rational debate on book good for societal maturity**  
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Veteran social scientist Rustam A Sani said rational discussion on the controversial 'May 13' book would make Malaysian society 'more mature' in its understanding of inter-ethnic relations.

Rustam said that "there is no doubt that the book authored by Dr Kua Kia Soong, whether we finally agree with some or all of its conclusions or not, offers a thesis for more in-depth and theoretical debate on the national question".

He also lamented that, after 50 years of independence, the 'dominant mode of thinking' prevailing in Malaysian society is still 'racial'.

Meanwhile, Rustam also cautioned against the use of emotional languages on all sides that may stir popular passion in the debate of 'May 13 - Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969'.

He said: "Whether the debate and discussion on the May 13 book would lead to positive or negative consequences depend on the manner, level and quality of the public discourse and how it is conducted".

Rustam, however, said that the controversial book must not be banned.

### **Various sources**

On the criticism that the book uses only declassified British diplomatic intelligence and western media reports that may be "biased", Rustam said all sources are "potentially biased" but it is nothing wrong to use them as long as the researchers bear in mind that it is only one set of sources and there are also others at the same time.

"The most important thing we readers must remember is that Dr Kua Kia Soong only attempts to offer an interpretation of the event, from the perspective of class analysis, basing on the new set of sources currently available to him in London," he said.

"When I conducted my research on Malay nationalism and the Malay Left, I also consulted the British sources, including intelligence reports and dossiers written by colonial authorities but I made my own evaluations, assessments and judgements of those sources," said the son of well known Malay nationalist Ahmad Boestamam.

"The true question is not the national origins or languages of sources the researchers have consulted but whether the evaluations, assessments or judgements they make is more or less accurate in the context of the particular set of sources", he added.

Rustam also said that "the Special Branch files on the May 13 riots could be more accurate but unfortunately, the archives are not open for public research".