

'Set up truth panel on May 13'

Other publications on May 13

May 13 - Before and After by Tunku Abdul Rahman

The May 13 Tragedy: A Report by Abdul Razak Hussein

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The May 13th Incident and Democracy in Malaysia by Goh Cheng Teik

13 May 1969: A Historical Survey of Sino-Malay Relations by Leon Comber

The Struggle for Malaysian Independence by J.J. Raj (Jr) - personal accounts of events pre and post-independence, including May 13

The Death of a Democracy by John Slimming

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government should set up a truth commission to investigate what really happened on May 13, 1969 for the sake of race relations and national unity as the country moves forward.

"After 1969, the whole incident has been shrouded in secrecy. Worse, it is used as a bogeyman to frighten the public," Suaram executive director Yap Swee Seng said at the *May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969* book launch yesterday at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, attended by more than 200 people.

He said those who lived through the May 13 clashes between the Chinese and Malays, which happened in some locations mostly in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, were alive and their testimonies could be called for.

"There is no public information about what happened, and this denies the public's right to know," Yap said, adding that the book, authored by Dr Kua Kia Soong, was timely because of Malaysia's 50th anniversary as an independent nation this year.

The book is based on documents recently declassified at the Public Records Office in London, which provide confidential observations and memoranda by the British and other foreign missions.

Kua said the book questioned the official history of May 13, and supported the view that the riots were not a spontaneous outburst of violence between the Malays and Chinese, but a planned coup against first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

"The documents show that peace-loving Malays in Kampung Baru (the main flashpoint in Kuala Lumpur) were also hostile to the hoodlums (who were involved in the clashes)," Kua said.

He said the declassified British documents "clearly show who were responsible for the violence" which officially killed 196 people and wounded another 439.

"There is a need for a special commission to unearth the truth of the 1969 racial riots

before there can be genuine national reconciliation," Kua, formerly a DAP MP for Petaling Jaya and currently New Era College principal and Suaram director, said in his book.

Priced at RM20, the book will be available in major bookstores in two weeks.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat deputy president Dr Syed Husin Ali, who was present at the launch, said the fact that the Malays in the Malay heartland of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Kedah did not clash with the Chinese in these states during May 13 showed that the riots were politically orchestrated and not a result of grassroots discontent.

Former Special Branch deputy director Datuk Seri Yuen Yuet Leng, who attended the launch, said while a "frank inquiry" should be held into May 13, it would not go very far.

"We, in the Special Branch, knew that emotions were running high (then) but we did not know that it (May 13) would happen the way it did," he said.

Kua and Syed Husin with copies of the book.

