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## CENSORSHIP / SULAK SIVARAKSA 'SURPRISED'

### Book on democracy banned

**ANCHALEE KONGRUT**

The Special Branch Police has banned a book on Thai democracy written by respected scholar Sulak Sivaraksa.

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The ban on Khawn Sattawat Prachattipattai Thai (Thai Democracy After More Than Half A Century) was issued by Pol Maj-Gen Sombat Supacheeva, chief of the Special Branch Police printed media affairs section, who claimed the book "undermines social order and public morals".

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Police said sales and distribution of the book are prohibited. They will confiscate copies already on sale.

Mr Sulak said the ban came as a surprise since the book, an anthology of his articles and speeches, was released in March. He doubted the ban was politically motivated.

"Normally I would say this case reflects an attempt to suppress freedom of expression. But this time I think there is a hidden agenda as it will tarnish the government's image and may derail the planned election," he said.

He has asked human rights lawyer Somchai Hom-laor to bring the case to the Administrative Court and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

He denied that his book undermines social order as claimed by the police.

"This is preposterous. What I wrote were the facts. [Police] must prove that I was wrong before banning it. My book is little or nothing compared to threats from corrupt politicians and the use of taxpayer money to sponsor lavish functions," said the outspoken scholar.

Mr Sulak has been in hot water before for his forthright remarks on social and political issues. He was charged with lese majeste several times but

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acquitted.

Many of his recent works are on sensitive topics. For instance, he wrote a review of The King Never Smiles, a banned book, for Pacarayasara, a bi-monthly magazine published by the Sathien Koset Nakhapratheep Foundation.

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