

Ministry's ban on 4 books irrational, says author

KUALA LUMPUR: Author Faisal Tehrani is challenging the Home Ministry's ban on four of his Bahasa Malaysia novels for allegedly spreading Shia teachings.

This was revealed during case management of the judicial review by Faisal, whose real name is Mohd Faizal Musa, yesterday.

He is seeking to reverse the Feb 12 ban, which was gazetted and came into force on April 1.

Faizal filed the judicial review bid on June 29 to legalise the distribution of two novels, *Sebongkah Batu di Kuala Berang* and *Karbala*; a collection of 13 short stories titled *Tiga Kali Seminggu*; and a poetry anthology titled *Ingin Jadi Nasrallah*.

Faizal, who is also an academician at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Institute of the Malay World and Civilization, said the ban was irrational because the four books were already in distribution long before the Home Ministry's ban and the books had not disrupted public order.

According to the judicial review documents, *Karbala*, *Ingin Jadi Nasrallah*, *Tiga Kali Seminggu* and *Sebongkah Batu di Kuala Berang* went into distribution in 2008, 2010,

2010 and 2011, respectively.

Faizal, 41, is seeking a court order to quash the ban, called the Printing Presses and Publications (Control of Undesirable Publications) (No. 2) Order 2015, which was signed by the home minister on Feb 12.

Faizal, who received the National Arts Award in 2006, sought a declaration that the ban had violated his rights to equal treatment under the law, as well as freedom of speech and expression.

He is seeking to have the ban declared null and void for going against Section 7 of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, which gives the home minister discretion to issue such bans on the grounds of national security.

He also sought general damages, cost and any other relief deemed fit by the court.

During case management yesterday, the High Court Registry set Jan 28 for further case management.

Counsel Nursyakeera Idora Ahmad Affandi represented Faizal.

Senior federal counsel Shamsul Bolhassan appeared for the home minister, who is the respondent in the case.