

Significance of Little India being declared "proclaimed area"

Little India has been declared a proclaimed area under the Public Order (Preservation) Act. And, as an expert tells Channel NewsAsia, it is perhaps the strongest order the police can use at this time, for such a situation.

By Claire Huang

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Police patrol Little India on December 9 following a riot the day before. (AFP/Roslan Rahman)

SINGAPORE: Little India has been declared a proclaimed area under the Public Order (Preservation) Act following Sunday evening's riot.

And, as an expert tells Channel NewsAsia, it is perhaps the strongest order the police can use at this time, for such a situation.

Jack Lee, Assistant Professor of Law at Singapore Management University, said: "Well, it gives the police, the authorities, very wide powers to do a number of things within the proclaimed area.

"For example, they are allowed to close off roads, or to restrict the use of certain roads, a curfew can be imposed, and they could even arrest people for committing some kind of crime within the area, or even carrying offensive weapons or materials that could be used in an offensive manner."

The law came into force in Singapore's pre-independence years.



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Assistant Professor Lee said: “It was first enacted by the Malaysian parliament in 1958 and it became applicable to Singapore when Singapore became a state in the Federation in 1963, and after independence in 1965, we retained it as one of our pieces of legislation.”

He said the law was used twice in 1964, in July and in September, during the race riots.

Following the outbreak of communal violence in July 1964, the Malaysian federal government declared the whole of Singapore as such an area.

This triggered the special powers the police had.

Then in September 1964, there was another outbreak of violence and a second proclamation was made

- CNA/nd