

Fatwa council okays poco poco

SEPANG: The National Fatwa Council yesterday decided that poco poco is not "haram" (forbidden) for Muslims, provided dancers do not violate the Islamic entertainment guideline spelt out by the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim).

Council chairman Tan Sri Dr Abdul Shukor Husin said, with the exception of Perak Mufti Tan Sri Harussani Zakaria, all the other members saw no reason to ban the controversial dance.

Abdul Shukor was speaking at a press conference after the council's quarterly *muzakarah* (discussion).

Poco poco was brought to the attention of the panel during the two-day discussion following a move by the Perak Fatwa Committee to rule the dance as "haram" at a meeting in February.

"Regarding dances and exercise, we have issued a guideline in 2007.

"Among others, the guideline states that Muslims must be mindful of the interaction between genders, adhere to the Muslim dress code, not perform acts in the form of worship and other non-Muslim religious rituals (during dances and exercises)," Abdul Shukor said.

He said while the guideline was not specifically for poco poco, it governs all forms of dances.

He acknowledged that there were many forms of poco poco and the dance steps were not only in the form of the cross and that it was also a form of exercise.

"We respect the view and the decision made by the Perak Fatwa Committee.

"If it (poco poco) does not contravene (the guideline) and is beneficial for health, we feel there is no problem.

"However, there are still studies that we have to review.

"At the same time, I want to advise Muslims to be careful and refer to Jakim's guideline when in doubt."

Despite the panel's decision not to declare poco poco "haram" for Muslims, Abdul Shukor clarified that the Perak ruling on the matter, which had been submitted by its Mufti De-



Poco poco fans can breathe easy with the National Fatwa Council's ruling that the dance is not haram. — NST picture by Nurul Shafina Jemenon

partment to be gazetted as fatwa, stands. This is because state fatwa councils are authorised by the Federal Constitution to issue a fatwa on their own.

It has been reported that although the ban was not binding for now, if the fatwa was gazetted, it would only be enforced in Perak.

Present during the press conference was newly appointed Jakim director-general Othman Mustapha.

Other matters discussed during the

meeting include the Mencevax vaccine administered to pilgrims going for haj or umrah, which was suspected to be "haram", and the issue of unclaimed conventional insurance compensation.

Abdul Shukor gave assurance that the vaccine can be used by Muslim.

The National Fatwa Council's committee comprises all state muftis and five religious figures whose appointments were consented to by the Conference of Rulers.

Perak mufti stands firm

KUALA LUMPUR: Perak Mufti Tan Sri Harussani Zakaria is standing by the Perak Fatwa Council's decision to ban poco poco in the state.

"With regard to poco poco, an Islamic association in Perak sought our advice on the dance

and the decision was made after the Perak Arts and Culture Department confirmed that the dance originated from a ritual dance practised in Jamaica which not only contains elements of Christianity, but also spirit worship," he said.