

Yoga ban



Inappropriate for Muslims?: A yoga practitioner going through the 'crow' asana, one of the more advanced postures, at a yoga centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Malaysia's top Islamic body has ruled that because the physical exercise contained elements of Hinduism, it could corrupt Muslims. — AP

Fatwa Council deems ancient form of exercise from India 'haram'

BY MAZWIN NIK ANIS
mazwin@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: The National Fatwa Council has declared that yoga is *haram* (prohibited) in Islam and Muslims are banned from practising it.

Its chairman Datuk Dr Abdul Shukor Husin said yoga had been practised by the Hindu community

for thousands of years and incorporated physical movements, religious elements together with chants and worshipping, with the aim of "being one with God".

"Because of this, we believe that it is inappropriate for Muslims to do yoga. The council is declaring that practising yoga, when it comes together with the three elements, is *haram*," he told a press confer-

ence here yesterday.

He noted that while merely doing the physical movements of yoga without the worshipping and chanting might not be against religious beliefs, Muslims should avoid practising it altogether as "doing one part of yoga would lead to another".

Muslims, he said, were discouraged from practising yoga even as

a form of exercise as it would ultimately lead to worshipping and chanting, which is against Islam.

"In Islam, a believer must not do things that can erode one's *aqidah* or faith. Doing yoga, even just the physical movements, is a step towards erosion of one's faith in the religion, hence Muslims should avoid it," he said.

> TURN TO PAGE 3

Shukor: Declaration done after serious discussions

> FROM PAGE 1

Shukor said that once the fatwa was gazetted, it would be up to the state governments to implement and enforce the ruling as religious affairs come under their purview.

"Malaysia is not the only country which prohibits Muslims from doing yoga. Singapore and Egypt have come out with the same edict," he pointed out.

The council, he said, came up with an edict on yoga as the matter was referred to it following growing concerns whether it would be against the religion if Muslims continued with the exercise.

Recently, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Islamic Studies Centre lecturer Prof Zakaria Stapa advised Muslims who had taken up yoga to stop practising it for fear that they could deviate from the teachings of Islam.

Shukor said the declaration of yoga as *haram* was done after serious and in-depth discussions among the council members who met last month.

He said that after studying the matter,

»Malaysia is not the only country which prohibits Muslims from doing yoga«

DATUK DR ABDUL SHUKOR HUSIN



**STAR 3G
Video Service**

Video call to *32838 on your Maxis 3G at
RMO.30/min

including the history and purpose of yoga, the council decided that it was inappropriate for Muslims as it could affect one's faith.

Asked if the decision would draw flak within the Malaysian community, including the non-Muslims, he said the ruling was only meant for Muslims. The rest were free to

practise yoga.

He said Muslims must be careful not to do anything that could erode their faith, adding the religion strongly advocates "prevention is better than cure".

"There are many other forms of exercise that Muslims can partake in, especially when the religion promotes healthy living and lifestyle.