

'Consult the rulers first'

KUALA LUMPUR: Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah wants the Rulers' Conference to be consulted before significant religious edicts are issued.

He also proclaimed that the decision by the National Fatwa Council to ban yoga was not in effect in the state.

"The Selangor state Fatwa Committee, chaired by the mufti of Selangor, will convene to discuss the practice of yoga in the state in detail so that a decision will not be made in haste," Datuk Mohamad Munir Bani, the sultan's private secretary, said in a statement.

"It is the hope of the sultan that, in future, any fatwa decision that affects society in general will be presented to the Rulers' Conference before it is made public.

"This is to ensure that when a fatwa is issued, it will be done wisely to avoid confusion and controversy."

In line with the Islamic Administration Enactment (Selangor) 2003, the findings of the state Fatwa Committee would be brought before the sultan, Mohamad Munir said.

On Saturday, the National Fatwa Council declared yoga *haram* for having the potential to undermine the faith of Muslims.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said the Selangor government would defer to the state Islamic Religious Council on the fatwa.

"We need to get advice from the council to understand what are the things that are against Islam. A study had been conducted on this matter and we need to respect the decision," he said at the Parliament lobby yesterday.

He said it would not be necessary to close down yoga centres as the ban only concerned Muslims.

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private secretary to the Sultan of Selangor*

the fatwa and they have to adapt to the advice of the council."

Meanwhile, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the ban had "caused anxiety among Hindus in the country".

"We will discuss this with

the prime minister and set the record straight. We understand the feelings of the people, particularly the Hindu community," he said in a statement.

Samy Vellu acknowledged that the National Fatwa Council had every right to decide on

Islamic matters but said the term *haram* (forbidden) had caused confusion among non-Muslims, particularly Hindus.

"The word *haram* has been misinterpreted as a total ban on yoga and this needs to be clarified."

He said the National Fatwa Council was not being questioned but "we are merely pointing out the sensitivity involved in a multi-racial and multi-religious society like Malaysia".

The council said yoga could be traced back to Hinduism and concluded that it could erode the faith of Muslims.

Council chairman Datuk Dr Abdul Shukur Husin said yoga involved elements that went against the beliefs of Islam in its physical movements, chanting and worship.

Even if a fatwa is gazetted at federal level, it is under the states' jurisdiction to decide whether it would be enforced.