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Hamid-Haji

MALAYSIA AND SAUDI COOPERATE TO EXPLAIN ON HAJ

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 3 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian and Saudi Arabian governments will cooperate to explain the actual requirements in performing the haj to the world Muslim community, stressing the point that such pilgrimage is only for those who can afford it.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said the definition of affordability covered all aspects such as mental and physical health, monetary as well the state of mental readiness to face the sea of pilgrims in the holy land.

Muslims must be made to understand that it was not wrong in the religious sense for those who did not have the capability (affordability) to perform the haj, he told reporters after attending a discussion between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Saudi Arabian Minister for Haj Affairs, Dr Mahmud Mohamad Safar at the Prime Minister's Department, here today.

Hamid said that Dr Mahathir had agreed with the proposal by the Saudi Arabian government and had directed him (Pusat Islam) to have follow-up discussions.

He said the move was also aimed at reducing the number of pilgrims which had been increasing every year. It is estimated that six million pilgrims will converge in the holy land in the year 2000.

"It is not that we don't encourage Muslims to perform the haj but Saudi Arabia is facing the problem of overcrowding and can no longer cope with the needs of the pilgrims," he added.

At this stage, the prayer hall could only accommodate one million people and the Saudi Arabian government was making preparation to accommodate four million people, he added.

According to him, the Saudi Arabian government had requested Malaysia's assistance in the explanation exercise as it felt that Malaysia could convince the world Muslims.

Earlier, Dr Mahmud explained that the Saudi government would redevelop Mecca, Medina and Arafah to provide better facilities to the pilgrims. --

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