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Guidance on performing the haj

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Muslims intending to perform the haj in Mecca have to be organised, mentally prepared and able to adapt easily to a different environment.

They also need to acquire the knowledge of what is required of them when performing the pilgrimage.

Most pilgrims encounter problems which could have been solved if they had received proper training and guidance and understood the environment in Mecca and Medina better.

The first Conference on Haj Guidance aims to, among others, address these issues, and initiate more co-operation among countries on haj-related issues.

Its secretary-general Dr Abu Bakar Bageder said today the conference would allow the delegates to reflect collectively on the need for organisation among the pilgrims.

"Research has shown that the well-trained and guided pilgrims are more successful at achieving their goal during the haj.

"The pilgrims come from different cultural and economical backgrounds. For most, they have to go bankrupt in order to perform the fifth pillar of Islam.

"Therefore it is part of our duty to make sure that they perform the pilgrimage properly by fulfilling all requirements physically, mentally and spiritually," Abu Bakar said.

The three-day conference, to be held at the Palace of the Golden Horses, will begin on Sept 30.

It aims to review haj training and guidance courses and ensure that pilgrims achieve their goal when performing the holy rituals.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to launch the conference which will be closed by his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"It is time to have a theoretical, well-grounded perspective on what a haj guidance programme really is.

"We hope that this would be the outcome of the conference, where 52 nations would be represented," Abu Bakar said.

The Haj Ministry of Saudi Arabia will present a paper at the conference to spell out what is necessary for haj co-operation worldwide.

Other countries will also be sharing their experience on haj guidance programmes and preparations for pilgrims.

"We chose to host the conference here as Malaysia has some of the most successful and established haj training programmes. We hope other countries would emulate its programmes.

"We are also impressed at the way Malaysia has set up a pilgrims fund allowing them to save small amounts of money over a long period of time which they could later use when intending to perform the haj in Saudi Arabia," Abu Bakar said.

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