

10 FEB 2003

Haj-Arafah

MALAYSIAN PILGRIMS FULFIL HAJ IN PEACE AND HARMONY

Arafah (Saudi Arabia), Feb 10 (Bernama) -- A sea of white-robed pilgrims, amounting to 2.5 million Muslims, lined up at their camps in the middle of Arafah begin the Haj pilgrimage.

At the Southeast Asia Muassasah camp, Malaysian Haj pilgrims, both old and sick, completed their ascended up the sacred Mount Arafah near Mekah today.

The chief for the Malaysian pilgrims Datuk Dr Haji Azmi Haji Ahmad said Tabung Haji ensured the elderly and the sick were ferried to Arafah by bus. And 240 pilgrims, who were too ill, were taken by ambulance yesterday.

Azmi said this was a new arrangement by Tabung Haji to ensure all pilgrims were able to fulfil the Haj.

Tabung Haji also transported them to Mina tonight and hired people to 'stone the devil' on their behalf. The old and infirm were carried to ensure they were able to do this on the second day of Tashrik on Feb 12 and 13 Feb.

Dr Azmi said as of this evening 36 deaths occurred among Malaysian pilgrims compared to 56 people the last season. The Minister in the Prime Minister Department also conducted the Arafah sermon and led the Malaysians in the Zohor prayers.

Dr Azmi said Allah had placed Muslims at a high level as his guest to the Holy Land while in the West human beings were viewed as small and insignificant. He urged Muslims to repent and pray.

The Malaysian Haj pilgrimage went as planned and he advised families of Haj pilgrims in Malaysia not worry as everything was peaceful.

Tomorrow, 10 Zulhijjah or Aidil Adha in the Holy Land, all pilgrims would proceed to complete their pilgrimage in Mina and Mekah, then fly home on Feb 17 and arrive in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 18.

He urged Muslim in Malaysia to pray for the safe returns of all the Haj pilgrims. He also wished Selamat Hari Raya to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and all Muslims in Malaysia.

--BERNAMA

OS SSA PC