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'ONLY GOD CAN DECIDE IF HAJ IS VALID'

Dr M giving impression that he is qualified to give fatwa on pilgrimage, says PM's aide

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IT is doubtful that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the religious authority to decide if the haj pilgrimage by Muslims to Mecca is acceptable to God.

The prime minister's political sec-

retary, Datuk Jailani Ngah, yesterday said Dr Mahathir had recently given the impression that he was qualified to give *fatwa* (religious edict) relating to the pilgrimage.

"His way of questioning is as if he is qualified to issue a *fatwa*. Only Allah can decide if pilgrims have achieved *haji mabrur* (haj accepted by God)," he said here.

Jailani had presented offer letters

to people selected to perform the haj this year under the sponsorship of Malaysia Development Bhd Foundation (IMDB Foundation).

He was responding to a recent statement by Dr Mahathir, who had questioned the legitimacy of haj trips funded by the foundation and that those sponsored would not attain *haji mabrur*.

Jailani said Dr Mahathir's son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz, had also short-listed 20 candidates from Kedah to perform the haj through the foundation's sponsorship when he was menteri besar.

"For those who have performed

their haj through the foundation, does Dr Mahathir care about their feelings and that of their family members?"

Jailani urged Dr Mahathir to retract his statement, although he said it was unlikely that the former prime minister would do so.

This year, the foundation will sponsor 1,100 people, comprising village heads, chairmen of village security and development committees and mosque imam, to perform the haj in Mecca.

A total of 4,611 pilgrims had benefited from the programme since 2011.

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Datuk Jailani Ngah