

PM: Tabung Haji envy of Muslim world

NST-2/7/2004:2

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TABUNG Haji is the envy of the Muslim world because of its efficiency in managing pilgrimages for Malaysians, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said on Wednesday.

The Prime Minister said at least five countries send experts to Malaysia every year to study how the organisation did its job.

"They are interested in learning from Malaysia and implementing similar programmes in their countries. Many have sent representatives for attachment with Tabung Haji," he said at the opening of

Tabung Haji's new operations headquarters here.

The Prime Minister said Tabung Haji had impressed many with its management of the welfare of more than 25,000 Malaysian pilgrims every haj season.

Its performance was all the more impressive as many pilgrims were elderly or infirm.

Others benefit from Tabung Haji's wide-ranging services, which help them focus on religious obligations with minimal distractions.

Abdullah said Saudi Arabian leaders he had met during his visit here were also happy with Tabung Haji's operations and the overall conduct of Malaysian pilgrims.

"They said if other countries did the same, Saudi Arabia's job in managing the haj season every year would be so much easier," Abdullah said. "Tabung Haji has truly become Malaysia's most popular product among Muslim countries."

During his three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister met senior officials including Crown Prince Abdullah Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, and Deputy Prime Minister Prince Sultan Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

The Saudi Government welcomes more than 2.5 million Muslims during every haj season. Its renovated headquarters in Jeddah comprises

three main blocks on 25,295 sq feet of land, cost nearly RM20 million and was completed in August 1999.

Wisma Tabung Haji is equipped with a savings and withdrawal counter that operates throughout the year.

Also present were Tabung Haji chairman Tan Sri Zainol Mahmood and chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Bakke Salleh, Malaysian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdullah Md Zin.

The Prime Minister and members of the delegation later performed the umrah in Mecca. Abdullah left for Kuala Lumpur last night.