

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON HAJ GUIDANCE
AT PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES
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Alhamdulillah, the First International Conference on Haj Guidance has been successfully carried out. The commitment shown by all delegates has enabled the conference to proceed smoothly and it is through discussions such as this participants can exchange views and learn from the experience of other countries for the benefits of all Muslims.

2. I was told that resolutions made at this conference would serve as a guidance to further enhances the effectiveness of Haj guidance in all Islamic countries. Sharing the experience of their respective countries while the in the holy land could help enhance the standard of Haj guidance in efforts to produce Haj pilgrims of quality.

3. The number of pilgrims performing the Haj increases each year and this has an effect on the management and performance of the Haj. We should train and provide guidance to them so they could adapt to new conditions that are difference. This way, they can perform their Haj correctly and in the spirit of camaraderie and tolerance.

4. In realising this, the Haj guidance program formulated must be systematic and orderly. The program must be comprehensive, encompassing matters before, during and after the performance of the Haj. This is necessary to ensure that the Haj pilgrims produced would be of quality and capable of contributing to their respective countries.

5. Each year, the Saudi Arabian government has to face various problems in managing the Haj pilgrims because of lack of knowledge and discipline amongst them. As such, it is the responsibility of every country to ensure that their pilgrims are given adequate guidance in performing the Haj. This is important as this will help ease the burden of the Saudi Arabian authorities in managing the pilgrims.

6. There is a need for the government and Haj management authorities to play this very important role in efforts to produce Haj pilgrims of quality. An educational content of the Haj guidance that is complete must be formulated. At the same time, a united approach must include the various media such as the knowledge council, forum, practical training and so forth.

7. In addition, it is important to provide adequate infrastructures in their respective countries as well as formulating Haj guidance strategy. There must also be easy access to guidance and reference for Haj pilgrims while in the holy land. This is to ensure that they receive guidance at all times.

8. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Saudi Arabian government for providing the infrastructure and logistics each year for Haj pilgrims all over the world. Nevertheless, I believe that there is still room for improvement. We know that the Saudi Arabian government is doing its best to improve existing facilities for these guests of Allah S.W.T. As such, Islamic countries must play their respective roles and give maximum co-operation in helping the Saudi Arabian government in whatever aspect.

9. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratefulness to the Saudi Arabian government for initiating the conference and hope it will continue to be held in years to come, with emphasis on other aspect of the management of the Haj.

10. The ritual of the Haj, being one of the five pillars of Islam, is a religious gathering, which has no peers in the world. Every year, millions of Muslim from all over the world congregates at Mecca to perform what is demanded of them by Allah S.W.T..

11. Allah S.W.T. In his greatness, has brought about unity amongst us through the Haj. Muslims, of various race and culture perform the ritual side by side. And every year without fail, the world will be informed of this ritual through international television, radio and the media.

12. If we reflect upon the Haj, the ritual tells us that Muslims throughout the world can be united. We can be and act as one. Unfortunately, misconceptions and deceptions have marred the image of Islam and Muslims throughout the world.

13. Often, when acts of terrorism occur and committed by those who professed to the faith, they are branded by the international media as Muslims fundamentalists or terrorists. But what is not mentioned is the fact that the act is committed by a person out to champion his own cause. Islam does not condone violence nor does it ask its followers to commit acts of violence in the name of Allah. Peculiar as it may seem, when a non-muslims commits and act of terror, he is not known as a terrorist out to uphold his religion. But when it is a Muslim, the Islam is involved. Strange but unfortunately true.

14. Looking back at the Haj, if we could inculcate ourselves with the sense of unity that prevailed, the International Islamic Community will be a force to be reckoned with, in terms of diplomatic and trade relations. We must work towards this, to be a united ummah which opinion can shape the world. Differences between Islamic nations must be resolved and we must work towards a unity. By being united, we will be stronger and our voice will be heard.

15. The experience and knowledge gained at this conference, hopefully, could serve as useful inputs in streamlining the Haj guidance in the respective countries of the delegates. Malaysia, through the pilgrim fund management board of Tabung Haji as it is commonly known here, is ever willing to share its experience on Haj management with others. Apart from this, any form of discussions and sharing of information for mutual benefit is greatly encouraged.

16. My thanks also to all delegates who have come all the way to Kuala Lumpur to attend this conference, and may you all receive the blessings of Allah S.W.T. for your contributions for the good of all Muslims. My thanks also to the Saudi Arabian government for giving Malaysia the honour and confidence in hosting the conference.

17. I wish also to thank Tabung Haji for its efforts in making the conference a success. Finally, I invite all delegates to take the opportunity while in Malaysia to enjoy our hospitality and see development that had taken place here before you leave for home.

18. On this note, it is my pleasure to declare the First International Conference Haj Guidance close.

Thank you.