

Headline	Tabung Haji fell prey to baseless allegations		
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Tabung Haji fell prey to baseless allegations

THE nexus between Islam and haj has always been one that can be compared to the seas and the sand, a connection that is unbreakable, come what may.

Haj, to my understanding, is a journey that is obligatory for every Muslim who is financially and physically able.

Hence, not performing haj must not be due to any other reason than *kemampuan* (ability).

Despite being a non-Muslim, I was taken aback after reading an article in *Berita Harian* that was shared on social media.

This has spurred a series of slanderous allegations against Tabung Haji (TH), a noble entity that advocates the fifth pillar of Islam.

It was sad to see that about 4,000 depositors had closed their accounts with TH and about 3,000 people had cancelled their registrations to perform haj based on these slanders.

I believe the negativity was started by irresponsible persons or politicians who felt the need to garner support by criticising others.

TH has fallen victim to them. Considering that close to 4,000 depositors had closed their accounts with TH, I wondered if these persons or politicians did the same?

Dr Bilal Philips, founder of the Qatar-based Islamic Online University, once said in an article: "Haj is a pilgrimage that shows that we are one nation, bound by religion."

As a non-Muslim, I agree with him.

Residing in a country where Islam is the official religion, I must say that religion is an immortal knot that binds us together.

Thus, it is sad to see how people are easily influenced by the wrath and malice of others to the extent that they are willing to transgress, what I understand to be, an important pillar of Islam.

I have often heard from my Muslim friends, as well as other testimonies, about the enlightenment that one attains after performing haj.

So, why would someone not want to perform haj merely because of negative perceptions? I stand strong in my opinion that religion

should never be politicised.

Realising the implications of these slander, I decided to talk to a few people and conducted research on TH.

This was what I learned: TH has been providing haj services as well as investments for 53 years.

An iconic organisation that is renowned worldwide, TH has fallen prey to baseless opinions by certain individuals, thanks to social media.

I also learned that it is not easy to get the opportunity to perform haj due to several reasons, such as the quota allocated by the Saudi government, as well as the wait that one has to undergo due to this quota.

I urge the media to publish more articles on the beauty of Islam and the importance of haj to counter malice and misconception as this can have a negative impact on the true meaning of the religion.

I also urge those who have been influenced, to remember the basics, that haj is the fifth pillar of Islam and to not let irresponsible politicians lead them astray.

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Petaling Jaya, Selangor

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