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Tabung Haji agrees on new haj rules

JEDDAH: Tabung Haji (TH) has started discussions with the Saudi Arabian Haj Ministry on the latest rules for pilgrims in preparation for the haj season.

Chairman Tan Sri Abi Musa Asa'ari Mohamed Nor said he did not foresee any major problems related to the new rules following the multi-phase expansion project on the Grand Mosque (Masjidil Haram) in Mecca.

"We agreed with the new regulations introduced by the Saudi Arabian government, although they will affect the comfort of the pilgrims."

Abi Musa said this at a press conference here, yesterday.

No details on the new rules were made available to the press yet.

Matters discussed were related to the registration of accommodation for haj pilgrims, *zam zam* water delivery, sacrifice of livestock and payment of fines in the case of haj laws being broken while pilgrims were still in *ihram*.

Abi Musa led the TH delegation, while the Saudi Arabian Haj Ministry was led by Southeast Asian Muasassah chairman Tan Sri Sheikh Zuhair Abdul Hamid Sa-dayu.

Zuhair said the Masjidil Haram expansion project involved three phases.

The first phase is scheduled for completion in August.

The Saudi Arabian government hopes to complete the entire project in eight years.

If this is accomplished, the project will be completed two years earlier than planned.

Malaysian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Datuk Syed Omar Al Saggaf said pilgrims from Malaysia were given many privileges by the Saudi Arabian government.

These privileges allowed the pilgrims to comfortably perform the haj without worrying about trifling hassles that could break their concentration while they carried out their religious duties, he added.

The privileges include faster immigration clearance at the airport compared with pilgrims from many other countries, who have to wait for longer hours before being allowed to enter Saudi Arabia.

"I advise our pilgrims not to abuse the privileges given.

"This is so that the other pilgrims will also get to enjoy (the privileges)." **Bernama**