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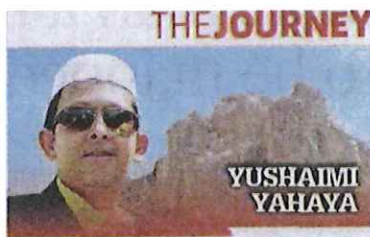


In high spirits for last leg of haj

STONING THE DEVIL:

The faithful brave overpowering heat, enormous crowds

MINA



IT seemed like the number of pilgrims congregating here to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil ritual at the three *jamaraat* stations swelled overnight.

In contrast to our first day, when we breezed through the first stoning session, the crowd swelled on the second day and slowed down our journey quite significantly.

We started our walk to the Moassim camping area here at 9.30pm and immediately felt the effects of the increasing number of people.

Unlike the first day, there was hardly any gap between the people who walked the same route that passed through the *jamaraat* stations to get to the Moassim area.

Different nationalities were allocated different times to carry out the stoning rituals.

Many opted to do it during the day to take advantage of the auspicious *du'ha* period.

Old, young, the physically challenged, the sickly, all braved the overpowering heat in an absolute act of faith to carry out the rites that form the last leg of the haj.

Muslims are required to throw seven pebbles at each of the three *jamaraat* stations during the three Tasyriq days, which ends today.

Our second day demonstrated why it was extremely important for a pilgrim to stick to the schedule and not stray if he came in a group.

It was very easy to get lost in this sea of humanity.

At times, some areas were closed off, and a pilgrim could easily get disorientated and lose his sense of direction.

It was for this reason that the Tabung Haji volunteers worked tirelessly to scour the roughly 5km

stretch to assist Malaysian pilgrims who might be lost.

It could be challenging for the older pilgrims to remember where the Malaysian tents were, as the Moassim area held millions of white tents that look the same.

However daunting the heat and the challenges posed by the sheer number of pilgrims, the spirits of the pilgrims were visibly high.

During our walk, pilgrims of different countries greeted each other with the *salam*, with wide smiles on their faces.

Many took the opportunity to do all kinds of charity — spraying water on the pilgrims as they walked or offering sweets — so they could attain extra “points”.

About 4am local time, we walked back to the Jamaraat complex and performed the second day rites on the third floor.

The crowd was larger, but there was hardly a long lag time as pilgrims moved on quickly after each throw.

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The Jamaraat complex in Mecca. Pic by Yushaimi Yahaya