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Haj fare same for first-timers

GURUN: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom said the fares for the haj pilgrimage this year would be the same as the previous year at RM9,980 per person.

The rate, however, would only be given to those going on the haj for the first time, while the rest would be charged based on the net unsubsidised fare.

"The fare is still low compared with other countries in the Asian region such as Thailand, which charges a haj pilgrim about RM14,000, Singapore (RM16,000), Brunei (RM17,000) and Indonesia (between RM10,000 and RM14,000).

"We've taken several factors into consideration before making this decision, including the people's needs and welfare as well as Tabung Haji's financial performance last year," he said after opening the annual meeting of SK Gurun's parent-teacher association here yesterday.

He said the government's subsidy for each fare would increase from RM3,060 last year to RM4,360 this year.

He said the Saudi Arabian government had approved an increase in the accommodation area for each new Malaysian haj pilgrim from 3.5 to 4.0 square metres.