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‘Ensure welfare of haj pilgrims’

KUALA LUMPUR: Tabung Haji is urged to secure the welfare of Malaysian pilgrims in completing the fifth pillar of Islam in the face of the rising cost of pilgrimage.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had instructed Tabung Haji to monitor the prices of hotels, meals and transportation in Mecca and Medinah in preparation for the haj seasons.

“God willing, the cost for each Malaysian pilgrim remains the same although the overall cost to perform the haj has increased,” Asyraf wrote on his Facebook account.

Asyraf, who accompanied Najib in Mecca for *umrah* on Friday, said Malaysia continued to give subsidy, amounting to RM162 million a year,

to first-time pilgrims.

“Each pilgrim is required to pay only RM9,980 even though the actual cost is RM18,890 per person for this Islamic calendar year. This means each pilgrim receives a haj subsidy of RM8,910.”

Asyraf said Saudi nationals paid between RM 8,000 and RM10,000 each to perform the haj, around the same price that a Malaysian pilgrim paid.

“The sum of RM9,980 covers all aspects of a pilgrim's needs such as accommodation, air tickets, transportation in Mecca and Medinah, food and beverages, pil-

grimage courses, health services, counselling, pilgrimage guidance and other necessities such as *ihram* clothing, *telekung*, bags and shoe bags.

“In short, a pilgrim needs to focus only on the haj rituals without worrying about other things.”

- Asyraf said such advantages stemmed from having Islam as the country's official religion.

“Various infrastructures have been made available for Muslims so that they can complete all five pillars of Islam,

including the haj, through Tabung Haji.”



Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki