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Current Issues on The Malaysian Hajj and Umrah

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Abstract

The call to the holy land is an opportunity and an invitation from Allah SWT. Not all individuals have the opportunity to go there even though there is enough money and all the necessities are available. The fact is that performing Hajj and Umrah is an obligation that must be fulfilled by Muslims once in their lifetime if they are able. For the Pilgrims who have the opportunity to go and attend the Holy Land, there are definitely many stories of joy and sorrow that will be shared together. This study will relate issues, problems and popular cases that have happened among pilgrims and Umrah especially in Malaysia. This study is also linked to themes such as hajj, umrah and pilgrimage. This study uses an exploratory approach to literature review to review elements of problems, issues and cases related to the Malaysian congregation. The findings of the study found that various issues that occur among Hajj and Umrah Pilgrims are factors that contribute greatly to problems faced by pilgrims when performing Umrah and Hajj. Hopefully the findings of this study will be able to help those who are responsible for managing all matters related to Hajj and Umrah in Malaysia to continue to provide good and smooth services.

Keywords: Hajj and Umrah, Pilgrims, Hajj Fund, Umrah Agency

Introduction

According to the Shafie school, the performance of Umrah and Hajj for Muslim individuals who have met the obligatory conditions of Umrah and Hajj is a mandatory decision that is once in a lifetime (Shamsudin et al., 2014). There are 5 mandatory conditions for Hajj and Umrah, namely: 1. Be Muslim, 2. Puberty, 3. Reasonable, 4. Independent, 5. Capable (Noor, 2018). The reality is that today, many Muslims in Malaysia have fulfilled and covered all these mandatory conditions, but there is still no call or opportunity to perform Hajj according to the convenience of Tabung Haji Malaysia (TH) (Mokhtar, 2022). This is different from Umrah because it is seen as an opportunity that is always open and bright for Muslims to go to the Holy Land throughout the year. Nevertheless, the Tabung Haji Fund (TH) always acts progressive and works hard by asking for additional quotas that aim to increase the number of Pilgrims from Malaysia to the Holy Land during the Hajj season (Khalidi, 2022).

According to Khalidi (2022), this quota issue is a hotly debated issue and a topic of conversation among Muslims who have had enough of the obligatory conditions of Umrah

and Hajj to this day. Not marginalized either, issues and problems such as the problem of enough pilgrims and fulfilling the obligatory Hajj and Umrah requirements. However, the congregation is empty and does not meet the health test aspects such as dialysis patients and wheelchair users, which is for the congregation who need dependence from others for the self-management of the congregation during worship in the Holy Land. Not only that, the issue of fraud that occurs among Umrah and Haj pilgrims is also like a fresh mushroom that grows after the rain. Pilgrims who were supposedly offered a 'super duper' cheap package offer, ended up only being able to perform *tawaf* and *saie* at Kuala Lumpur airport (KLIA 1) only. Unfulfilled wishes end up costing and embarrassing the closest relatives (Roslan, 2022).

The problem of inconsistent hakam laws and misunderstandings that often occur among Umrah and Hajj pilgrims is of great concern these days. The various umrah agencies out there that offer a variety of attractive packages and some that don't make sense is something that is unique in the umrah market in Malaysia. All this will make Umrah and Haj pilgrims in Malaysia entitled to make a choice. The power to buy is with the Congregation itself. However, it needs to be seen as something serious when it involves issues and problems involving legal umrah related to Umrah worship. There are many more issues that may be a cancer and have a big impact on Umrah and Hajj Pilgrims in Malaysia. Therefore, this article will cover various issues related to Hajj, Umrah and pilgrimage in general.

Issues Regarding Hajj

The issue of rotation of Pilgrims to get a quota is seen as an issue that has no end to this day. According to the Malaysian Association of Travel Agencies (MATA), the issue of fraud and Pilgrims being stranded as a result of being deceived by various schemes and Hajj packages in Malaysia is caused by the weakness of the Haji Fund (TH) which is still weak and inefficient from the aspect of arranging the best strategy from the aspect of rotation Congregation (Mokhtar, 2022). This issue is so intense and often happens when the Hajj season arrives every year (Nasbah, 2022). This has clouded the situation and atmosphere of the savers who have enough savings to perform the Hajj in the current year. Even more disappointing is the unmanaged and systematic rotation system in which the names of some pilgrims are called repeatedly until the name goes up to pay the Hajj for the second and third time.

The issue of increasing the cost of Hajj packages every year is something that is debated among savers and prospective Hajj Pilgrims in Malaysia (Hamid, 2022). It is not enough to increase the Hajj package starting with the significant increase of the Umrah package in the current season. This increase involves several things that are seen as a challenge that makes it so difficult for potential pilgrims, especially from the aspect of inflation that causes foreign currency exchange and also the introduction of some new charges and taxes by the government of Saudi Arabia (Bernama, 2022). At the same time, the price game that is often played by the owners of hotels in Mecca and Medina is seen as something that greatly burdens the Haji Fund (TH) in continuing to maintain the price of the Hajj package for potential Pilgrims in Malaysia. This has been proven by the statement issued by the Executive Chairman of Andalusia Travel and Tours, Ustaz Dato Daud Che Ngah, where the level of readiness of potential Hajj Pilgrims needs to be prepared early and no longer only depends on the subsidy offered by the government because the allocation is very limited due to Pilgrims being dumped which increases every year (Bernama, 2022).

A sense of responsibility needs to be nurtured and built by every travel agency that offers hajj packages to all prospective pilgrims. This is because the price of the hajj package is not something cheap and low in price. If something happens, the agency that is given the responsibility to manage the Pilgrims will have to pay back in the sense of making a 'refund' process. This has been proven by the issue where a total of 380 Hajj Pilgrims who have been stranded as a result of charging promises issued by their Hajj agency by offering Hajj packages at affordable and cheap prices and offering sure to fly by using the Furada Visa for the recent Hajj season . The Hajj Agency has taken the responsibility of returning all the money paid by the Pilgrims without fail. This issue is seen as an issue that often occurs at the last minute when the Hajj season flight is about to start (Bernama, 2022).

This has been confirmed by the Malaysian Tourism Council (MTC) where all issues surrounding the Hajj issue need to be taken immediate action by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) so that this issue does not recur and a solution is taken as soon as possible. Ministers need to step in and take the leading role instead of the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC). Hajj authority is under the authority of the Minister of Religion who is dominant in all affairs related to Hajj worship in Malaysia (Parzi, 2022).

Issues Regarding Umrah and Pilgrimage

The ethical and moral issues presented by Umrah pilgrims while in the Holy Land is something that needs to be seen as bringing the image and good name of the country, especially the Islamic country. There are various issues happening recently, especially pilgrims who deliberately make fun of and make fun of religion when entering ihram by pretending to be a different gender from the gender shown on the official identification card (Latifah, 2022). The openness given by the government of Saudi Arabia in accepting many Pilgrims by using 'tourist' or tourist visas gives great joy to the pilgrims who are seen to like traveling for Umrah on their own and 'backpackers'. However, it has been misused by individuals who may be seen as ignorant in religion but try to open publicity widely to the public (Ahmad, 2022). Finally, it has a bad impact on the religion of Islam itself.

That's not enough, lack of sensitivity and too much consideration of the money allocated for all matters of performing the Umrah has changed the stance of the Umrah pilgrims to instead perform the Umrah by 'Do It Yourself' or DIY (Ida, 2016). This is not wrong and does not violate any policies and regulations for the permission to perform Umrah by the government of Saudi Arabia. However, it is not suitable and appropriate for the pilgrims who are new to perform Umrah for the first time because the experience is not yet there. This is because, all the management and travel of all activities or itinerary throughout the presence of the Congregation in the Holy Land is on the commitment and responsibility of the Congregation itself. If there is any emergency that also involves death, it needs to be managed by oneself without fail (Adnan, 2022).

Therefore, this is different for Pilgrims who follow an Umrah agency where all travel matters and scheduling and activities while in the Holy Land are completely under the guidance of the agency. Mainly, choose an agency registered under MOTAC (Jamaludin et al., 2021). If not skilled, that's how Pilgrims get stranded in the Holy Land due to no guidance for

the journey back to Malaysia. That is not enough, Umrah worship is done independently without the guidance of a murshid and certified teacher.

The issue that arises among elderly pilgrims is the mastery of the latest technology, especially the need to have a smart phone or 'smart phone' when performing Umrah worship in the Holy Land is a problem that is often received as a result of complaints by Umrah pilgrims to Umrah agencies in Malaysia. This becomes a complication and difficulty for the pilgrims who are really blind to technology and also 'Information Technology' or IT, where they need to be trained and instructed to use the technology that is used called 'Nusuk'. In the past, the 'Nusuk' application was named as 'Ea'tamarna' (Hayin, 2022). The purpose is to manage and organize all Umrah journeys of the pilgrims to enter the 'Raudhah' area with a queue system set based on the system. This application is seen to be very helpful, because on average the pilgrims feel satisfied and comfortable compared to before the enforcement of this application system was established. This is because, with the presence of this application, all male and female Umrah pilgrims have the opportunity to enter 'Raudhah' without having to fight and the space to worship inside is very comfortable and not rushed because of the time allocation given by the government of Saudi Arabia. All Congregations need to learn to use the 'Nusuk' application without fail because it is an opportunity to enter 'Raudhah' later (Hayin, 2022).

The increase in the cost of the package at the last minute as a result of the effects of inflation and the increase in the value of the currency has been seen as a burden that is so surprising to the pilgrims especially as they have finished making the payment for the entire package and have very close and short time left before departure. This increase is seen not to involve many umrah agencies because of the various approaches and methods used by umrah agencies to make their pilgrims feel burdened and also cause dissatisfaction among them (Roslan, 2022). However, this reality and fact is something that clearly cannot be controlled and curbed because it involves the issue of current currency fluctuations. Obviously, this has become an issue that worries the pilgrims so much that many of them have caused complaints on social media and express dissatisfaction at the office of the umrah agency they represent.

Guidance services and ongoing courses which are guided by Mutawwifs or religious guidance officers from umrah agencies are important and should be taken seriously. This is because the level of understanding of the pilgrims will be filled and enlightened accordingly as soon as they attend the umrah course set by their respective umrah agency. This is very important to avoid any misunderstandings and mistakes when they perform Umrah in the Holy Land. It exists and occurs where many pilgrims make mistakes when performing Umrah, ultimately Umrah is incomplete and hangs without proper explanation by the Umrah agency (Mohd et al., 2020). Therefore, it is very important that the pilgrims must attend and get exposure correctly and accurately from the guide so that all their Umrah journeys coincide with Islamic religious law.

Closing

Comfort and convenience in ensuring Umrah and Haj pilgrims have the opportunity to perform worship in an orderly and perfect manner is something that needs to be taken seriously. All parties need to play an equally fair and equitable role in ensuring that all parties have the opportunity to perform worship by achieving perfection when in the Holy Land.

Many Malaysian pilgrims are so respected by Arab countries because they have high self-discipline and are systematic in performing Umrah worship so brilliantly.

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