



Hajj: The journey of the soul, body

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Mr. Sindi

Saudi confirms receipt of N2.2 billion from NAHCON

• Refunds 33 private tour operators Pg. 6

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Lagos debunks N47m fraud allegation

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899,353 Muslims perform largest pilgrimage of COVID 19 era

- Nigerian pilgrims pray for peace, security at the plain of Arafat
- It's our collective duty to pray for our dear country – NAHCON Chair



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Nigerian pilgrims at Mount Arafah



Alhaji Hassan



NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan (2nd right) and other top officials at the prayer for the nation



The Ulama

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HAJJ: THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL, BODY

After Ramadan comes another important rite for Muslims. The rite, which Prophet Muhammad (SAW) described as the best deed, after belief in Allah and His Messengers and Jihad in the way of Allah. What, therefore, is this rite and why is it regarded as the best deed? These very interesting questions and others will be the focus of our editorial in this special edition.

What is Hajj?

Al-Imam As-Sayyid Sabiq (May Allah be pleased with him) did a marvelous job in explaining what hajj means in his book, Fiqh Us-Sunnah. He dedicated a section to Hajj where he offered the linguistic meaning of the term as 'he prepared, or betook himself, to or towards a person... or towards an object of reverence, veneration, respect or honor.'

According to the Shari'ah, Hajj means a specific journey to Makkah during the designated month of Dhul-Hijjah for the performance of Hajj as an act of worship to Allah. In the noble Qur'an, Allah (SWT) clearly states the months hajj should be performed. He (SWT) says: "The Hajj is (in) the well-known months... i.e. 10th month, 11th month and the first ten days of the 12th month of the Islamic calendar.

So, whosoever intends to perform Hajj therein by assuming Ihram, then he should not have sexual relations (with their spouse), nor commit sins, nor dispute

owes to Allah for those who can afford the journey" was revealed.

Hajj is an obligation once in a lifetime

Abu Hurayrah (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAW) gave a sermon (Khutbah) and said: "O people, Allah has enjoined Hajj upon you so perform Hajj." A man asked: "Is it every year, O Messenger of Allah (SAW)?" He (SAW) remained silent until the man had said it three times, then he responded saying: "If I had said yes, (then) it would have become an obligation (once every year) and you would not have been able to do it." Then he said: "Do not push me to tell you more than what I have left you with, for those who came before you were destroyed because they asked too many questions and argued with their Prophets. If I command you to do a thing, do as much of it as you can, and if I

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This verse signifies the purpose of Hajj, it being the worship of Allah. Allah, the Exalted ordered Ibraheem (AS) to build the Ka'bah and call people to circumambulate it, and stand up (for prayer), bow down and make prostration (in prayer) to Allah (alone). Therefore, one who performs Hajj is required to sincerely worship Allah and associate none as partners with Him; seek His help, forgiveness and taqwa.

Pilgrimage to Makkah is therefore not for tourism as done by non-Muslims. It is not a trip to a sports' fiesta or an innovated religious festival to celebrate or mourn religious leaders - no matter how huge the crowd may be. Hajj is Allah's ordained spiritual rite for all able-bodied and mature Muslim males and females who are capable and financially buoyant. It is an obligatory journey to the House of Allah

(SAW) was asked, whether or not women are required to take part in Jihad. He replied: "Yes, upon them is Jihad which does not contain fighting: Hajj and Umrah." Also, Ibn Umar (RA) reported the Prophet (SAW) saying: "The one who fights for the sake of Allah and the pilgrim who goes for Hajj or 'Umrah are all guests of Allah. He called them and they responded; they ask of Him and He will give them." [Ibn Majah]

Benefits of Hajj

Allah said (to Ibraheem AS): "And proclaim to mankind the Hajj...that they may witness things that are of benefit to them..." [Surah al-Hajj (22): 28] Hajj has both, worldly benefits and benefits in the Hereafter. Worldly benefits include trade, business and other commercial benefits, since Allah says: "There is not sin on you if you seek the Bounty of your Lord (during the pilgrimage by trading, etc.)." [Surah Baqarah (2): 198]

The benefits of the Hereafter, which every sincere Muslim yearns for, are forgiveness of sins and a guaranteed place in Paradise. In other words, Hajj is a purification of the soul from sins and a means to gain the mercy of Allah. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood (RA) related from the Messenger of Allah (SAW) "Keep on doing Hajj and 'Umrah, for they eliminate poverty and sin just as the bellows eliminate impurities from iron and gold and silver." [Tirmidhi]

The Effects of Hajj on the Pilgrim

The Hajj, which is graced by Allah's acceptance, has a lasting and observable effect on the pilgrim. Hajj is the perfection of one's faith, since it has in it all the qualities of the other forms of worship. Hajj combines both the physical and monetary aspects of worship in Islam, such as solah (prayer), which the pilgrim offers in the Kaa'ba, the House of Allah.

It encourages spending of material wealth for the sake of Allah, which is the chief characteristic of Zakaat. By spending from his wealth to perform the Hajj. The pilgrim cleanses from his heart the greed deposited by love of this world. Hajj builds generosity and develops in the individual a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of Allah.

When a pilgrim sets out for Hajj, he dissociates himself from his homes and dear ones to please Allah; he suffers hardship and self-restraint, which is from the essences of fasting and Itikaaf. The pilgrim is trained to completely forget the material comforts and glimmers of the worldly life, he avoids the use of oil, scent, perfume, etc., wearing only two pieces of unsown cloth, does not cut hairs and nails, he keeps himself busy day and night worshipping Allah and carrying out the rites of Hajj. In short, he abandons all his desires and submits to Allah with Ikhlas (sincerity), Ittiba (obedience) and humbleness, calling out to His Lord: "Here I am before You, My Lord, as a slave of You..."



Pilgrims circumambulating Ka'aba

forbid you to do something, then avoid it." [Muslim]

The Purpose of Hajj

once in a lifetime; albeit there is no crime in visiting the holiest sanctuary on earth more than once, if there is means to do so.

“The father of faith, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) also prayed to Allah (SWT) that the city of Makkah be secured and blessed with abundance of fruits and goodies. He said, after the construction of ka'bah (the house of Allah) with his son, Prophet Ismail (AS), "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits - whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day' (Q2: 125-129) and in Q14: 35, he adds; "...keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols. ”

unjustly during the Hajj. And whatever you do, (be sure) Allah knows it." Qur'an 2: 197

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam

Ibn Umar (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "Islam is built upon five (pillars): testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad (SAW) is the Messenger of Allah, establishing regular prayer, paying Zakaat, Hajj and fasting Ramadan." [Bukhari & Muslim]. According to majority of the scholars, Hajj was legislated in the ninth year of Hijrah (Prophet's migration from Makkah to Medina), meaning the year of the Delegations (al-Wufood), in which the verse of Surah Aal-Imran: 97: "Hajj to the House is a duty that mankind

In Islam, associating partners with Allah is a grievous sin. Whoever commits shirk (polytheism) and dies in the act without repentance shall be punished by Allah. Hence, Hajj is not about worshipping idols, the Ka'bah, or the black stone, as some ignoramus erroneously believe. Allah specifically told Prophet Muhammad (SAW), "Let them (the believers) worship Allah, the Lord of this House (Ka'bah)..." Q106:3

In another verse, Allah says: "And (remember) when We showed Ibraheem (AS) the site of the House (saying): 'Associate not anything with Me, and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it, and those who stand up (for prayer), and those who bow and make prostration (in prayer)." Q. 22:

Virtues of Hajj

A number of ahadeeth speak about the virtues of Hajj. Once, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was asked: 'What is the best deed?' He stated: 'Belief in Allah and His Messenger (SAW).' He was then asked: 'What next?' He said: 'Jihad in the way of Allah.' He was again asked: 'What next?' He replied: "The Hajj which is preformed correctly and accepted by Allah." [Bukhari & Muslim]. He (SAW) also said: "One Umrah until the next Umrah is an expiation for what is between them. And the Hajj that is accepted by Allah and performed properly has no reward other than paradise" [Bukhari & Muslim].

Furthermore, for women, their Jihad is Hajj. When the Messenger of Allah



“

It's not surprising that the annual religious gathering attracted millions of Muslim worshippers from all walks of life to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, yearly. It's the promise of Allah (SWT) that; "they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass. - Qur'an 22: 27

"Verily, the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (Makkah), full of blessing, and a guidance for al-'aalameen (mankind and jinns)." Qur'an 3:96

It was reported in Saheeh Muslim that Abu Dharr said: "I asked the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about the first mosque to be built for people on earth. He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Haram.' I asked, 'Then which?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Aqsa [The furthest mosque, in Jerusalem].' I asked, 'How long between them?' He said, 'Forty years.'

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2022 'Emergency' Hajj



Nigeria pilgrims at Mount Arafah



NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan (2nd right) and other top officials at the prayer for the nation



The Ulama

899,353 Muslims perform largest pilgrimage of COVID 19 era

- Nigerian pilgrims pray for peace, security at the plain of Arafat
- It's our collective duty to pray for our dear country – NAHCON Chair

By: Rasheed Abubakar, Makkah

No fewer than 41,000 Nigerian pilgrims joined nearly one million Muslims from across the world on the plain of Arafah on Friday, 9th of Dhul-Hijjah, 1443AH, equivalent to 8th of July, 2022; an intense day of worship considered to be the climax of the annual Hajj rites.

Pilgrims were seen raising their hands, supplicating and offering repentance on the sacred hill, where the best of mankind, Prophet Muhammad, (SAW) delivered his farewell sermon (Khutbat Al-Wada') to the companions who partook in the last Hajj he performed on earth.

Muslim News correspondence who was live at Arafah reported that the experience and spiritual frenzy sent many pilgrims to tears.

The pilgrims had set out for Arafah before dawn, chanting 'Talbiyah' repeatedly, "Labbaik, Allahumma labbaik, labbaika la shareeka laka labbaik, innal hamda wanne'mata, laka wal mulk, la shareeka lak" meaning, "Here I am, O Allah! Here I am; Here I am. There is no partner unto You, Here I am. All praise and favours and sovereignty belongs to You, there is no partner unto You", remaining in deep contemplation and worship until nightfall.

This year's pilgrimage marked the

largest since COVID-19 struck the world with significant effects on religious and socio-economic activities. Nonetheless, the attendance of 899,353 worshippers was far lesser than half of the pre-pandemic era.

Pilgrims who were selected for 2022 Hajj were below age 65 and must have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also required negative test results of monkeypox from pilgrims.

Prayer for the Nation

As many pilgrims went beyond the plain of Arafah atop mount Arafah, located in the southeastern part of the sacred city of Makkah, Nigerian pilgrims at the various tents held special prayers for the peace of their country which has been bedeviled with several challenges, chiefly insecurity.

Later on the same day (Friday), NAHCON, the umbrella body for Hajj operations in Nigeria organised a special national prayer for the progress, development and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The prayer, led by the Chairman of the Ulama wing of NAHCON, Sheikh Muhammad Kabir Adam, the Imam of Abuja Central Mosque, was attended by prominent Islamic scholars representing different tribes and ethnicities.

The immediate past Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Ilorin and

Chairman of the National Hijrah Ummatul Islamiyyah, Kwara State chapter, Professor Badmus 'Lanre Yusuf, and Chief Missioner of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria Sheikh Abdur Rahman Ahmad led various sections of the prayer session.

Prof. Badmus thanked Almighty Allah who made the 2022 Hajj possible, after two years of COVID-19 break.

He said, "More importantly, we're grateful to Allah for counting us among the pilgrims that made this year's Hajj with the Arafah Day being on a Friday. It's rare occurrence, Alhamdulillah."

While appreciating the leadership of Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan-led NAHCON, Prof. Badmus also acknowledged the efforts of the Ulama who were committed to visiting various tents for the purpose of enlightenment.

While Prof. Badmus prayed unto Allah in Arabic against the disintegration of Nigeria, Sheikh Ahmad offered prayers in English thus, "Oh Allah, we gathered here at the best of places and best of times, with the firm conviction in the word of the Prophet (SAW) to pray for our country, for ourselves, the world and humanity.

"Oh Allah, you know everything, you see everything, you have power over everything, we have come to intercede on behalf of our country, Nigeria, where things are at its lowest, we are at the edge of the precipice.

We are tired and weary. We are here today as a people representing the generality of Nigeria, irrespective of their religion, tribe and ethnicity. Answer all our prayers.

Imam Ahmad sought Allah's guidance for President Muhammadu Buhari, urging Him to guide and direct the president to the solutions of the problems being faced in the country. He also urged Allah to inspire, help and strengthen him just as he asked Him to forgive the sins and the shortcomings of the citizens", he noted.

The trio of Sheikh Abubakar Sani; Sheikh Tajudeen Oyebanji and Sheikh Sulaiman Njoko rendered their prayers for the nation in the three major local languages in Nigeria, namely Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages.

NAHCON calls for national rebirth

In his speech, NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Hassan, called for a national rebirth to make Nigeria attain its full potentials in the comity of nations.

He offered prayers for the success of the 2023 elections, where only leaders who would change the fortunes of Nigeria will emerge.

"Our message to Nigerians at home is that we remember them in prayers, let them also remember us in their prayers. We are using this period of Arafah, which is a special day, to

Nigeria launches inaugural Hajj flight to Saudi Arabia



Gov. Zulum

The inaugural flight of Nigerian pilgrims for the 2022 Hajj exercise begun in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, on Thursday, June 9, with 546 pilgrims.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari inaugurated the exercise at the Maiduguri International Airport, in presence of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, NAHCON, Chairman, Alhaji Zikirullah Hassan, and other top officials.

Represented by Governor Babagana Zulum, the president said the decision to choose Maiduguri for the inaugural flight was in appreciation of the return of peace in the state.

"Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam," he said and urged the pilgrims to be good ambassadors of the country and adhere to COVID-19 protocols.

The president commended the Borno government for its complementary support to the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), adding that the federal government had provided the necessary

logistics to facilitate the smooth conduct of the Hajj exercise.

In his remarks, the Chairman of NAHCON, Alhaji Zikirullah Kunle-Hassan, thanked the federal government for its support to the commission in spite of short notice to prepare and organise the Hajj exercise.

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NAHCON, Alhaji Hassan, thanked the federal government for its support to the commission in spite of short notice to prepare and organise the Hajj exercise.

He said that 43,000 Nigerian pilgrims would perform the 2022 Hajj exercise in the Holy Land, and admonished them to be of exemplary character.

Alhaji Kunle-Hassan also advised the pilgrims to use the opportunity to pray for themselves and for the country ahead of the 2023 general elections.

Also, Ahmed Arabi, the chairman of Borno State Pilgrims Welfare Board, expressed joy over the selection of Maiduguri for the inaugural flight, adding that the state government had granted all requests by the board to ensure smooth conduct of the Hajj exercise.

He said that over 1,300 pilgrims from the state would perform the Hajj exercise.

The Shehu of Borno, Abubakar Umar-Garbai, urged the pilgrims to be law-abiding and observe COVID-19 protocols.

cont'd from pg. 3

...Nigerian pilgrims pray for peace



Alhaji Adams Chandy leading the prayer at Ondo tent in Mina



Pilgrims from Niger State in Haram during prayer for the nation.

pray for the success of our country in all ramifications," Alhaji Hassan said.

The Chairman of the Ulama, Sheikh Adam called on the Muslim scholars and pilgrims to continue to pray for Nigeria.

Plateau

It was a moment of emotional devotion and commitment to the will of Allah laden with hope and absolute belief as the Executive Secretary of the Plateau State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Sheikh Auwalu Abdullahi Esq. led hundreds of Muslim pilgrims to pray for the total restoration of peace, security and wellbeing to Plateau State and Nigeria generally.

Tears, groan and supplications filled the air as the pilgrims sought Allah's urgent intervention in the sorry situation Nigeria finds itself as they prayed in the House of Allah in Haram.

Niger

Pilgrims from Niger state also held a special prayer for an end to the challenge of banditry, kidnapping, hunger and other related vices that has bedevilled Niger state in particular and Nigeria in general.

Executive Secretary, Niger state Pilgrims Welfare Board, Alh. Umar Makun Lapai who led the pilgrims and hajj officials during the prayer said the country needs special prayer at the moment.

The prayer was held inside the Grand Mosque of Makkah after tawaf (circumambulation) by all the pilgrims and officials.

According to him, prayers remain the only viable option in bringing an end to the current security challenges which has continued unabated as he called for all hands to be on deck to ensure its success.

Alh. Umar Makun Lapai further said all the pilgrims from Niger state were hale and healthy and were expected to move to Madina from Mecca for some visitation any moment from then.

On the problem of abscondment by

prayers in Saudi Arabia for the continued good governance in the state and peaceful co-existence in the nation.

This was contained in a statement issued from Kabba, Saudi Arabia by the Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Culture

We pray for the President (Muhammadu Buhari). Oh Allah, guide him, direct him to the solutions of problems Nigeria is facing. Inspire him, help him, strengthen him, forgive his sins and our shortcomings. Ameen ya Rab



The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) Media Team paid a working visit to the Ministry of Hajj Media office, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to explore collaboration on dissemination of information to pilgrims.

some pilgrims during annual Hajj, the Executive Secretary Niger state Pilgrims Welfare Board added that their pilgrims are well cultured and that will not embark on such shameful act.

Oyo

Oyo State Muslim pilgrims have offered special

and Tourism, Dr. Wasiu Olatubosun, and made available to newsmen on Wednesday in Ibadan.

According to the statement, the special prayers were led by the Vice-Chairman, Oyo State Pilgrims Welfare Board, Muslim Wing, Dr. Ibrahim Adebolu.

The commissioner said the prayers had in attendance top government functionaries

from the state and pilgrims from other states who expressed pleasure with the Oyo delegation.

According to him, "The last two batches of 2022 Oyo State Hajj exercise offered special prayers for Gov. Makinde while observing their obligatory Tawaf (circumambulation around Sacred Kabba and walking at Saffa and Marwa).

"Oyo State pilgrims were joined by other well-wishers during the special prayer session for our governor.

"We also prayed for our country, Nigeria, as well as peaceful coexistence of the nation," he added.

Ondo

The Ondo State Pilgrims also organized special prayers for the Governor of the state, Arákunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, as part of the concluding activities of this year's hajj rites.

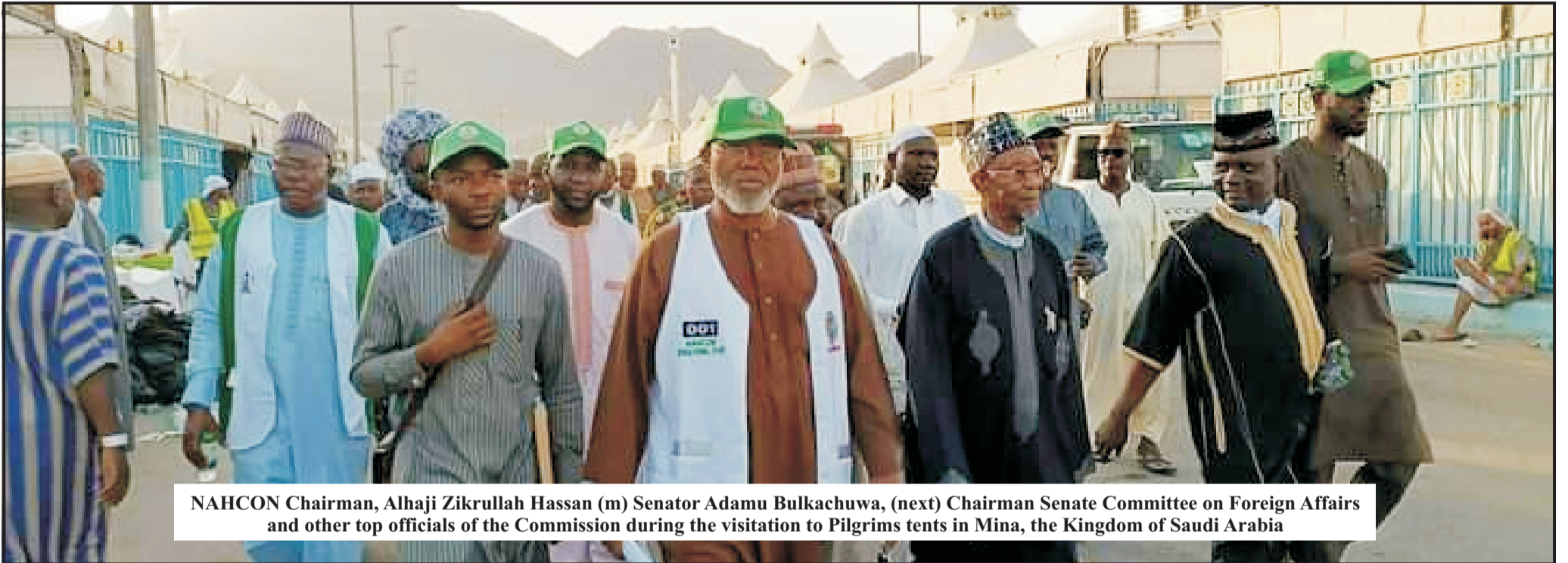
The Chairman Muslim Welfare Board, Alhaji Adams Chandy during the prayer session enjoined the pilgrims to intensify prayers for Akeredolu, for the love he has demonstrated for the Muslim faithful in the state.

Chandy said, "Since the creation of Ondo State 40 years ago, We have not found it so good like this before. Apart from the befitting standard central mosque in the government house which previous government had jettisoned and the governor has resuscitated, he had done so much in some other areas for Muslims, to which all of us can testify, hence the need to pray for him."

The faithful prayed Almighty Allah to give Akeredolu long life in good health and Allah's protection over his family and the entire good people of the state.

Read full article on:
www.muslimnews.com.ng

Special Report: 96.4 percent of Nigerian pilgrims made emergency Hajj 2022 despite all challenges



NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan (m) Senator Adamu Bulkachuwa, (next) Chairman Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and other top officials of the Commission during the visitation to Pilgrims tents in Mina, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Out of one million pilgrims who were expected to perform this year's Hajj globally, only 899,353 eventually made it to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the 2022 Hajj, according to statistics released on Friday, July 8, by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), shortly after Saudi Arabia closed its airspace to pilgrims.

Invariably, 100,647 amounting to 1.5 percent could not make the 2022 Hajj globally, which formally ended on Monday, July 11, for various reasons, Muslim News can authoritatively confirm.

Efforts to get the breakdown of the affected individual countries have proved abortive. However, findings revealed that foreign pilgrims from non-Arab Asian countries made up the highest number of pilgrims at this year's Hajj representing 53.8 percent of the total pilgrims.

While pilgrims from Arab countries made up 21.4 percent, their counterparts from non-Arab African countries such as Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria, among others constituted 13.2 percent and pilgrims from Europe, America and Australia reached 11.6 percent.

In Nigeria, no fewer than 1,551 intending pilgrims (3.6 percent of the slots allocated to Nigeria) missed out due to what the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), an umbrella body for Hajj operations in Nigeria, called "cancellation of flight scheduled to airlift pilgrims to Saudi Arabia."

Despite challenges faced by the NAHCON, and subsequent expression of regret and apology by its Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan, *Muslim News* findings have revealed that Nigeria used 96.4 percent of the slots allocated to it by the Saudi Arabian authorities for the 2022 Hajj.

Addressing the challenges

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April 2022 had allocated 43,008 Hajj slots to Nigeria, barely three months before the commencement of the 2022 pilgrimage exercise.

Without delay, NAHCON swiftly unveiled Hajj activities and allocated slots to States, private tour operators and the Armed Forces few

days after the announcement from the Kingdom in the same April 2022.

Describing it as an "Emergency Hajj" due to Saudi Arabia's short notice to the participating countries, Alhaji Hassan, who had for years led the Osun State Pilgrim Board to successful Hajj exercises, assured that no registered pilgrim would be left in Nigeria at the end of the deadline for the airlift of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Slots allocation date

In the past, Saudi Arabia allocated Hajj and Umrah slots to participating countries earlier to enable adequate preparation. For instance, in 2018, the Kingdom approved 95,000 slots for Nigeria as far back as February. While in 2019, the Saudi authorities granted the same

airlines to participating states.

Airlifting agreement

Nigerian based airline, Azman Air was booked to fly pilgrims from 16 States such as Kano, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Enugu, Imo, Kaduna, Ogun, Ondo, Rivers, and Yobe, including the Armed forces.

Eight states including Edo, FCT- Abuja, Lagos, Osun, Oyo, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara, were scheduled to fly with Saudi-based based airline, Flynas.

While 13 states namely Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Taraba, including Borno, where inaugural flight commenced on Thursday, June 9, were booked to fly another

were in two digits, with the highest being 24 hours' delay.

"It followed by 23 hours delay, 22 hours and lowest in this category were twice 10-hour delays. Only 13 flights left on schedule out of the 65 outbound flights so far witnessed from the country," she added.

Extension of airspace deadline

The Zikrullah Hassan-led NAHCON's quest to airlift all intending pilgrims made the Chairman to formally apply for the extension of date, which was granted by the Saudi Arabia on two separate occasions; first between July 4 to 6, and second, from July 6 to 7.

The Commission, however missed the window to airlift all the 43,008 pilgrims before the closure of airspace, resulting in over 1551

money. Our investigation revealed that some tour operators collected additional fees from their pilgrims with the understanding that they will charter an aircraft for them.

"When we get home, we will thoroughly investigate this. I make bold to say that the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria collected no penny from any individual for the matter of operations whether in the states or from tour operators. That will be the responsibility of their managers."

Apologies

While vowing to investigate all allegations of frauds committed by individuals or private tour operators in the name of NAHCON, Alhaji Zikrullah sincerely apologised to the intending pilgrims who missed the 2022 Hajj exercise. The release stated that:

I make bold to say that the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria collected no penny from any individual for the matter of operations whether in the states or from tour operators. That will be the responsibility of their managers.

figure to Nigerian contingents as early as December 2018.

But when Saudi Arabia announced its intention to accommodate foreign pilgrims for the 2022 Hajj after a two-year hiatus due to coronavirus pandemic that wreaked havoc across the world, Nigeria and other participating countries had only two to three months to prepare, due to the delay in announcement of approved quotas for countries.

Before the announcement of Hajj in April 2022, the anticipation was high from both States and private tour operators, who were perturbed on how to address the accumulated numbers of intending pilgrims who had paid for 2020 and 2021.

Muslim News findings revealed that the Commission upon receiving the slot, albeit lately, immediately swung into action and by June 3, NAHCON did not only seal airlifting agreement with air carriers, but also allocated specific

Nigerian airline, Max Air.

Muslim News gathered that problems started emerging when some States Pilgrims Boards could not immediately secure for their intending pilgrims: Basic Travel Allowance (BTA), sufficient funds for Visas, and negative PCR test results, which led to the cancellation of about nine flights between Friday, June 10 and Monday, June 13.

PCR, monkeypox test

The sudden instruction which required pilgrims to complete the monkeypox declaration form 24 hours prior to their departure also disrupted airlifting as many pilgrims were not aware of the circular issued by the Royal Consulate General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Explaining, the Assistant Director, Public Affairs Division of the Commission, Hajiya Fatima Usara, noted, in a press statement released on July 4, that a total of 13 flights were cancelled with another 57 delayed take-offs, seven of which

intending pilgrims, majority from Kano, missing out for the 2022 Hajj exercise.

Although some intending pilgrims and particularly the Association for Hajj and Umrah Operators of Nigeria (AHOUN) accused the Commission of fraud, unprofessional conduct, subjective and suspicious decisions, which they believed marred the exercise. All allegations have since been denied by NAHCON.

Fraud allegation

For instance, on the case of a popular Yoruba actress and TV Presenter, Adedoyin Kukoyi, who claimed in a trending video that she and some intending pilgrims paid NAHCON over N700,000 extra fee for airlifting, the Commission insisted it didn't collect any additional fee from either any individuals or states.

According to Alhaji Hassan, National Hajj Commission does not collect money from individuals. Even in the state, we also don't collect

"The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) humbly acknowledges the following: that it owes deep and unreserved regrets to entire intending pilgrims to 2022 Hajj for the hardships and disappointments experienced during outbound airlift operations to the holy land. The Commission offers similar apologies to the Federal Government of Nigeria, State Pilgrims' Welfare Boards, Private Tour Operators, and the general public for any embarrassment the situation of the past few weeks might have caused.

"Sadly, despite all efforts to airlift all Nigerian intending pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the 2022 Hajj, NAHCON was incapacitated in discharging this responsibilities fully, majorly due to last minute setbacks that frustrated its plan to conclude airlift of pilgrims by 27th June of this year.

"Unfortunately, the chartered flights option that gave so much hope to NAHCON and the Private Tour Operators' leadership also became a failure as their IBAN accounts failed accreditation by the respective authorities in Saudi Arabia."

Poor feeding

While staying in Mina tents during the Hajj rites, Nigerian pilgrims protested the standard of meals served as many of them demanded inclusion of their local foods in the menu list.

Matters Arising: Understanding what happened between NAHCON, AHOUN, Adedoyin Kukoyi, Other pilgrims

Stage 1: Excerpts of what Adedoyin Kukoyi said in the viral video:

NAHCO! NAHCO! (referring to NAHCON), National Hajj 'kini won'?... You have defrauded us! For we are going to the holy land to go and work, 'a n lo sise ni', we didn't go through the back door. Awon ti won o ni 750k pa da lo le (those without 750k went back home). Awa ti ani, ati wa ni airport lati Saturday (those of us who paid the N750k have been at the airport since Saturday). I decided not to make this video earlier than this time because I wanted to know if anything positive would come out of it. They kept lying to us. The Chairman (of NAHCON), Dr. kinni? The man with the white beard. He saw us and ran away. NAHCON and AHOUN, whatever your names are, you people have questions...Ole ni gbogbo yin (you all are thieves). I am on this case, and I will push it. You all are thieves, collecting money and not doing the right thing... Dr. Zikrullah, Chairman NAHCO (NAHCON), he has white beard, he was putting on a face mask. When he saw us, he ran away.



Alhaja Kukoyi (Behind: Al-Yusuf)

Stage 2: How the media blew the story

"We have been robbed", Doyin Kukoyi calls out NAHCON over alleged Hajj fraud – was the headline used by the Nigerian media, including several bloggers who picked the story. Others used the same kicker; "We have been robbed", with a related headline, "Actress Doyin Kukoyi misses Hajj, slams corrupt officials."

According to one of the reports, "Actress Doyin Kukoyi has called out the National Hajj

Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) pilgrims on Tuesday, July 12

over alleged fraud. Doyin in an Instagram live session on Wednesday, July 6, accused the Commission of defrauding her and others of three million naira which she claimed was collected as their flight ticket.

In all the reports, the fraud allegation was only focused on AHOUN, the Association of Hajj and Umrah Operators in Nigeria, not NAHCON. So, it was AHOUN that pilgrims - without the mention of AHOUN.

Stage 3: What happened when Muslim News visited the affected pilgrims on Tuesday, July 12

Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) pilgrims on Tuesday, July 12

Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) pilgrims on Tuesday, July 12

without the backing of NAHCON. Kukoyi didn't only accuse NAHCON of defrauding them even though she mentioned "NAHCO", "NAHCO" and its Chairman, 'the man with white beard' several times in the video.

Stage 4: AHOUN reacts to the allegation

In a phone call with *Muslim News* in Saudi Arabia from his base in Kano, Nigeria, on Thursday, July 14, the President of AHOUN, Alhaji Nasidi Suleiman said the body doesn't deal directly with pilgrims, but private operators who are its members. He then assured that if truly they paid into AHOUN's account as claimed, they will get their money back.

i. No pilgrim paid directly into AHOUN's account. That account they showed you can only be used by our members (private agencies) to pay into our account, not pilgrims. We don't deal with pilgrims, we deal directly with private tour operators, who are our members. Every member of AHOUN has its own passengers. Money will be paid into private tour operators' account by passengers (pilgrims). The operators pay into our account directly, not pilgrims. And, AHOUN paid through the RTGS' CBN into NAHCON's account.

ii. In any case, Al-Yusuf is a travel agency. We aren't sure if he is our member, because if he is, he will not ask his pilgrims to pay into our account. He is the one the pilgrims will pay the money to, not us. It's now his duty to pay into our account. And if truly he (Al-Yusuf) paid into our account, he will get his money back. Or, if they (the pilgrims) truly paid

into our account, which is not supposed to be so, they will be contacted to send their account numbers so that they can get back their money. Anybody that paid into our account for rescue flight will get back their money once Mu'assasa remits money into our International Bank Account Number (IBAN).¹

Stage 5: NAHCON exonerated, vows to investigate fraud allegation

Although not directly involved in the fraud allegation against the Nollywood actress and other pilgrims who eventually performed the Hajj, NAHCON had on several occasions denied collecting additional money from individuals or private operators and promised to investigate all the cases of fraud.

i. The Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan said, "National Hajj Commission does not collect money from individuals. Even in the state, we also don't collect money. Our investigations revealed that some tour operators collected additional money from their pilgrims with the understanding that they will charter an aircraft for them."

ii. When we get home, we will thoroughly investigate this. I make bold to say that the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria collects no single money from any individual for the matter of operations whether in the states or tour operators. That will be the responsibility of their managers.

¹ Hajj 2022: Saudi Arabia confirms receipt of N2.2 billion from NAHCON, ready to pay 33 private tour operators



Mr. Sindi

Saudi Arabia confirms receipt of N2.2 billion from NAHCON, pays 33 private tour operators

processing during the airlifting of pilgrims for the 2022 Hajj, due to mismatch in the account numbers and account holders.

It would be recalled that in June 2022, the private operators under the aegis of the Association for Hajj and Umrah Operators of Nigeria (AHOUN) had alleged that NAHCON refused to fund their IBAN (account), which affected the processing of their intending pilgrims' visas.

The Association also said the Commission's failure to pay into Mu'assasa's account led to many of their members missing scheduled flights to Saudi Arabia for the 2022 Hajj, which commenced on July 7 and ended on July 11.

Chairman of the Mu'assasa has, however, exonerated the Commission of any wrongdoing, explaining that the issue of the IBAN account was affected generally by lateness in this year's Hajj announcement but specifically to issues relating to mismatch in the account numbers and account holders' names on one hand, and on another level inaccurate account numbers.

He made the revelation when Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan led a delegation comprising top officials of the Commission and some private tour operators to the members of the Mu'assasa on Wednesday.

The meeting was aimed at seeking debrief and resolution of two crucial 2022 Hajj operational matters; the first of which was to seek an explanation for the Private Tour Operators' IBAN account accreditation setback and way forward.

The second was the poor feeding arrangement during the pilgrims' stay in Mina and Arafat as well as NAHCON's request for a refund on behalf of the pilgrims.

Muslim News gathered that the remaining money yet to be credited to the 33 tour operators companies' IBAN account is 19.9 million riyals, as Mr. Sindi assured that the monies are intact and will be returned to NAHCON's account as soon as the Mu'assasa receives a formal letter of request to that effect.

The Mina poor feeding

Regarding the Mina feeding arrangement, Mr. Sindi of the Tawafa company disclosed that from next year, Mu'assasa will work with only well-established caterers that have adequate manpower and sufficient facilities.

According to him, we may even require bank guarantees before accepting any recommended caterer. This will happen because of the disappointment they also witnessed this year from the engaged caterers, though the company initially got the impression that they were satisfactory. However, since pleasure of the pilgrims is their priority, the Tawafah Chairman explained how, during one of his tours in Mina, he had to order for a substitute meal from one of the field offices after complaints by the pilgrims on the food quality and quantity they were supplied with.

Speaking with *Muslim News* on Saturday, August 13, almost a month after Hajj, the President of AHOUN, Dr. Nasidi Yahya Suleiman confirmed that the Mu'assasa has started paying into its members' IBAN.

According to him, they have started paying back into our IBAN. In fact, they have paid a lot of people. My company, Dan Bare travels agency Limited, was among the first

Dr. Suleiman also clarified that apart

from Nigeria, some other African countries had problems sending money to their IBAN.

"Although the Mu'assasa said they sent the money into our accounts and it bounced back, they should have tried to find out from the banks or authorities and keep trying until it was late. It wasn't just Nigeria, other African countries were also affected. We had our challenges here and compounded it over there," he noted.

While urging the leadership of NAHCON to consult widely the veterans in the system and study how it's being done in other countries, Dr. Suleiman called on the Mu'assasa to review their charges and gear up toward a hitch-free exercise in 2023.

He said, "NAHCON has to study what's operating in other places. Their predecessor always goes to other places like Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc to study how they handle Hajj operations. Also, NAHCON is trying to do things solo. This will not help them at all. They should learn and open their minds to learn. If they do that, there will be a success, certainly."

"For the Mu'assasa, they should gear up because what they did this year wasn't acceptable at all. They took us 10 years back. Of course, as a company, they aren't expected to operate and lose but they should not go for too much profit. "Imagine, what we used to pay for tent A before the pandemic was about 4,000 riyals but this year, we paid almost 18,500 riyal for just 5 days. It's just too much. It's outrageous. They are welcoming the guests of Allah and certainly, they must be able to serve without looking for too much profit. We'll engage them, maybe through their chambers of commerce for the success of the 2023 hajj", he added.

The Tawafah Company for Pilgrims of African Non-Arab Countries popularly known as the Mu'assasa on Thursday confirmed receipt of a total sum of 19.9 million riyals equivalent to N2.2 billion from thirty three Nigerian Hajj and Umrah tour operators through the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON)'s RTGS account with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Chairman of the Mu'assasa, Mr. Ahmad Sindi, who made the confirmation, however, said the money could not be paid to the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) of Nigerian private tour operators who were expected to use the fund for visa

Hajj, one of my greatest dreams

— Kwara Gov's aide says

Kaosarah Adeyi, Senior Special Assistant on Youth Engagement to Kwara State Governor has been basking in the euphoria of performing the 2022 Hajj, which she described as 'one of her greatest dreams'.

Adeyi is one of the fifty pilgrims that made the 2022 'Emergency' Hajj exercise with Hajj Mabur, a leading private tour operator in Lagos, Southwest, Nigeria

The governor's aide while speaking with *Muslim News* further revealed that the 3-week experience was a life-transforming spiritual experience which unlocked a new level of spirituality and feeling of newness in her.

She added that the highlight of her experience as a pilgrim from Nigeria was having the opportunity to give more gratitude to the Almighty for his mercies and grace that she had enjoined in the last 25 years of her life.

She told *Muslim News* that the story of her journey for the holy pilgrimage started during a conversation with her husband, Mal. Abdul Hafeez Oyedepo.

According to her, "It was just during a random conversation with my hubby that I mentioned my wish to perform the fifth pillar of Islam, Hajj. Before I knew it, he had put a call through to Hajj Mabur to make findings on the registration process.

"This has always been one of my greatest dreams in life and I am most grateful to Almighty Allah, my darling husband and Hajj Mabur Ventures Ltd. for making it come through.

"The highlight of my Hajj was having the opportunity to give more gratitude to the Almighty for his mercies and grace I have enjoined for the past 25 years of my life. Not leaving out the need for me to seek forgiveness for all my sins.

"The three-week Hajj experience was really a life-transforming spiritual experience which unlocked a new level of spirituality and feeling of newness.

"I am most grateful to HAJJ Mabur Ventures Ltd. for guiding us through the spiritual journey. They are really what their motto says "...Simply Hospitality, truly Spirituality."

"I was surprised we took off and returned on the exact date and time we were given by them, and I am most impressed with their services, calmness and the professionalism of their officials.

"We were given accommodation in a very good hotel close to Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah and Masjid Nabawi in Medina. We were served quality meals (African dishes) all through our stay. Most importantly, I had a new family. To my roommates turned sisters - Alhaja (Simiat, Haleemah and Taofeeqoh), thank you for making my stay a great one.

"Apart from regular and daily sermons, we did Ziyarah in Medina for few days where we had the opportunity of observing several prayer in Masjid Al-Madinah Al-Mumawarah, Masjid Quba. We also had visitation to Ajuwa Date Palm, visitation to where the Prophet's (SAW) companions were buried and where battle of Uhud was fought amongst others.

"We finally proceeded to Makkah for all our Hajj rites, took our Ihram at Miqat, did Tawaf at Ka'bah, Sai (Safa and Marwa), prayed at Arafah, spent



Alhaja Adeyi

some nights in Mina and a night at Muzdalifa, threw pebbles at Jamarat and others.

"I had a great Hajj experience and I pray this won't be my last. May Allah grant all the rest of my family and friends the privilege to be here too. Alhamdulillah

NAHCON Chairman leads powerful delegation to Nigerian pilgrims at Mina tents

A day before the over 41,000 Nigerian pilgrims will leave the Mina valley, after completing their hajj exercise, the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) team paid them a courtesy visit at their various tents, asking after their welfare.

The visit, held on Sunday, July 10, also gave the commission an opportunity to relate and interact directly with the pilgrims, who narrated their experiences, challenges.

Muslim News Nigeria was part of the national media team that accompanied the Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan's Group, a delegation which also included Senator Adamu Bulkachuwa, Chairman

Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs; Ambassador Yahaya, Nigeria's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia; NAHCON Commissioners, Representatives of various government Ministries, Agencies & Commissions.

While the Chairman's team visited Ondo, Cross-River, Sokoto, Lagos, Nasarawa, Osun, Zamfara, the remaining two groups led by National Commissioner Finance and Personnel, Alhaji Nura Yakasai and Commissioner, Planning, Research, Information and Library Services (PRILS), Prince Mommoh, also visited other states tents during the visitation that lasted for more than three hours.



Hassan Zikrullah (m) addressing Lagos pilgrims



Senator Adamu Bulkachuwa (m) addressing Sokoto pilgrims



Osun State pilgrims

Stoning of devil: Is there shaytan in Jamrah?

A fe lo so'ko as-shaytani", meaning "We are going to throw stones at the devil", said some Yoruba-speaking pilgrims from southwest, Nigeria, as they picked 49 pebbles on the floor of Muzdalifah, where they had passed the night and headed to Al-Jamarat.

Jamrah, which started on the 10th Day of Dhul Hijjah, the first day of Eid-el-Adha, is the fourth rite of Hajj. The first is camping at Mina, the City of tents; from there, pilgrims move to Arafat for the climax of Hajj exercise and return to pass night at Muzdalifah.

So, the excited pilgrims continued to exchange words over how they will deal with the devil once they arrived Al-Jamarat as they took buses to Mina and then walked to the wall (although some pilgrims boarded a train to Mina), while others retained the old tradition of walking from Muzdalifah to Al-Jamarat, a distance of about 4 km.

The erroneous belief about the devil being stationed at Al-Jamarat didn't, however, emanate from only the Yoruba-speaking Muslims; it's an old distorted terminology celebrated by the media, who in most cases fail to convey what it really symbolises other than scary reports of stampedes.

For instance, Voice of America (VOA) headline of

Saturday, July 9, read "Muslims 'Stone The Devil' as Almost Million-Strong Hajj Winds Down." Nigeria's The Guardian headline also followed the same lead, with "Muslims 'stone the Devil' as almost million-strong hajj winds down", among others.

The Guardian headline immediately generated mixed reactions from Muslims who considered it blasphemous to call the Jamrah rite "stoning the devil", while the hate and intolerant non-Muslims used different derogatory terms to describe it.

But what's really the Jamrah? What does it symbolise?

Muslim News findings revealed that the Al-Jamarat is a concrete wall or pillar where pilgrims symbolically throw 49 pebbles of stones as part of the Hajj rituals, which is divided

into the three parts, namely Jamrah Al-Ula [The first stone pillar], Al-Jamrah Al-Wusta [The second (middle) stone pillar] and Jamrah Al-Aqabah [The last and biggest stone pillar].

It's a three-day exercise that saw nearly a million pilgrims pelt 7 stones each on the first day (on Saturday) at Jamrat Al-Aqaba. On Sunday, the worshipers pelted another series of 7 stones on Jamrat Al-Sugra, then another 7 at Jamrat Al-Wusta, finally Jamrat Al-Aqaba. The same act will be concluded on Monday, July 11.

Evidently, there is no physical devil at Jamrah. More than anything else, what the pilgrims do by pelting the symbols of shaytan, the accursed, is that in their individual lives, they are rejecting the way of the devil.

The pilgrims stoned the wall as a way of reaffirming their commitment to Allah and to the ethos of Islam (its laws, discipline, way of life).

The pelting symbolises the casting of all devilish inclinations in one's life. It means all pilgrims that participated in Jamrah are affirming their rejection of the evil ways of life and reaffirming their commitment to the way of moral rectitude. That is why, as they throw the stones, they seek Allah's refuge from the handiwork of Shaytan. Jamrah is a way of rejecting direct or indirect devil's worship. This is the essence of it.

The concrete walls about 30 metres long and 18 metres high are not the devil. And in fundamental ways, they do not represent the devil. They are symbols. It all dates back to the time of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). These are the points where shaytan tried to dissuade and create confusion in his heart. It was at those points the father of faith, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) rejected the whispering and suggestions of the devil.

Therefore, the pilgrims only visit Al-Jamarat to symbolically reject devilish inclinations and suggestions. This is essential for the understanding of the general public. Everything that is done is symbolic, just like some of the other activities in the course of the performance of Hajj.



Publisher, *Muslim News Nigeria*, Rasheed Abubakar (right); Head, Journalism Dept., Lagos State University (LASU), Dr. Tunde Akanni; Director, Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Muideen Adeleke; Vanguard Newspaper's Haruna Balogun; TVC's Kaseem Adeokun; The Nation Newspaper's Tajudeen Adebajo; Shakirat Adunola of The Guardian; and Alhaja Doja, Senior Reporter for TVC, as Lagos NAHCON Media Collective at Muzdalifah for the 2022 Hajj.

Inside NAHCON's Medical Centre



NAHCON Medical centre (Clinic 1) at Nama Mawaddah, Makkah

Nigerian pilgrims with different health challenges through the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, NAHCON medical centre at Nama Mawaddah, Makkah in their numbers to seek medical treatment.

"A ina asibiti yake", meaning "where is the hospital?", a Hausa-speaking pilgrim from Sokoto asked at the reception of the 15-storey building which also houses rooms for officials of the Commission and pilgrims from Sierra-Leone.

"Take a lift to the first floor", said the clinic attendant who responded to the pilgrims, many of whom were accompanied by their fellow pilgrims to consult with the doctors.

The expansive first floor is one of the several facilities created by the national medical team for the Hajj 2022 operations for the well-being of the over 41,000 pilgrims that eventually made the 'emergency' pilgrimage, the fifth and the last pillar of Islam.

Apart from this facility, there is another main clinic (NAHCON Central Pharmacy) situated within Al-Hod Hotel in the Gishlan area of Sharah Monsur and four outposts in Makkah, which attend to the medical needs of about 500 to 600 patients per day. Besides, in Madinah, NAHCON had three clinics, each with the capacity to attend to the health challenges of over 250 patients per day; all before Arafat Day on July 9.

From Mina to Arafat including Muzdalifah and Jamrah, pilgrims experienced extremely hot temperatures ranging from 45 to 50 Degrees Celsius. On Arafat, the day that marked the climax of the Hajj rites, for instance, the sun was at its

peak, and the NAHCON chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan swiftly advised the Nigerian contingents to engage in Ibadah (worship) in tents rather than under the sun at the plain of Arafat. Yet, many pilgrims defied the advice and undertook the journey to Mount Arafat under the blazing sun.

Not leaving the situation to chance, the well-equipped medical team had in place alternative safety measures for pilgrims from Nigeria through an arrangement tagged: "Caravan Health System" and the "Emergency Response Service". These were meant to take care of the pilgrims right from the time they moved to Mina until the rites of Hajj were completed with the pelting of stones at Jamrah before they returned to their various hotels in Makkah.

A Caravan Health System is a deliberate medical service that makes provision for the presence of medical team among the pilgrims as they move from Makkah to Mina to Arafat, and back to Muzdalifah. The pilgrims move under the eagle eyes of the medical team that are well-equipped to provide care for the contingent on the go.

Dr. Usman Shuaibu Galadima, Chief of Operations and Head of the Medical Mission to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Hajj 2022, said, "If you look at the Mina



NAHCON Clinic 2 at Al-Hod Hotel, Sharah Monsur, Makkah.

ten tents and the entire outlay, there were 17 service points representing each Mu'assasa. Each of the tents had clinics on standby to provide basic healthcare services to the pilgrims. We also provided four advanced life support ambulances for emergency response.

"The temperature was high and since our pilgrims were highly mobile; moving from one place to another, they get dehydrated, threatening their wellbeing, especially kidney health. So, we educated and encouraged them to stay within their tents to perform their Ibadah and if they must go out, they should use an umbrella (some organizations distributed umbrellas) or wait till the sun goes down. We also advised them to drink a lot of water to rehydrate their body," he stressed.

Post-Arafat Day Stage

Medical personnel who spoke to our correspondents said though the number of patients who require medical attention reduced in the immediate post-Arafat day period, compared to the same period during the 2019 Hajj. Although, many pilgrims were still seen admitted to NAHCON medical centres across the city of Makkah.

We were reliably informed

that at the Nama Mawaddah clinic, no fewer than 500 to 600 pilgrim

s received treatment daily.

An on-the-spot observation conducted by this medium revealed different activities going on simultaneously on the first floor, which has different departments like the waiting room, registration unit, consulting rooms, pharmacy to the treatment room, medical data unit, male and female wards, among others.

Four nurses were on duty when we first visited the clinic on Monday, July 25. One of the nurses said they worked on eight hours shift.

"At every time or shift you come here, you will see four nurses on duty, three doctors, and two pharmacists as well," she affirmed.

361 Medical personnel for Pilgrims' needs

There are about 361 medical team drawn from different states of the Federation for this year's Hajj. *Muslim News* can authoritatively confirm, that among them were 139 Doctors and 132 Nurses, 75 Pharmacists, and 14 Community workers. 10 members of the medical team were among the NAHCON advanced team that first arrived in the Holy Land on June 6, ahead of the first inaugural flight of pilgrims from Maiduguri, Northeast for the 2022 Hajj.

Muslim News gathered that other members of the advanced team

included the national reception team, and accommodation and feeding committees.

Dr. Usman Shuaibu Galadima confirmed the figure of the personnel, adding that no state is licenced to operate clinics during Hajj because the Saudi Ministry of health does not deal with sub-national entities.

"That is why the composition of the national medical team is in partnerships with states. The state contributed about 60% of the personnel we had at the National clinic. The clinics were situated within the clusters of Nigerian pilgrims. Usually, it is not more than 3 to 5 minutes walks to any of the clinic, therefore, increase in access to health care services offered by NAHCON

"Total composition was originally 365 of the national medical team for Hajj 2022 but unfortunately four members couldn't join us due to flight delays. The first team, 10 in number were in the advanced team that arrived on the 7th of June. Some had finished their work and returned home. Others will still be around until the end of the operations."

Most Common Illnesses

Findings revealed that the most common sickness among the pilgrims during the just concluded Hajj are the big five namely: upper respiratory tract infection i.e people with cough, sore throat, and so on; body pains, malaria, peptic ulcers disease and acute gastroenteritis.

According to Dr. Galadima, "We also manage pilgrims with cases of hypertension, diabetes. We've also seen people that require urgent and serious surgeries including heart valve replacement and many others which we referred to several Saudi hospitals."

Winter at Hajj 2022

Explaining the cause of the common cold or flu which is prevalent among pilgrims even from other countries, the Head of the Medical Team said, "It's mainly a viral infection and those kinds of viral infections are highly contagious because they are droplet infections which spread through coughing and anyone close to the infected persons can easily get infected."

"This is the same concern they had for COVID-19 because it is easily transmissible. That is why Hajj was suspended for two years. Even this year, the population was reduced to about 50% but most of what we attended to were not COVID-19."

"However, we've had only three confirmed cases of COVID-19 among pilgrims from Nigeria, they were all isolated and treated by the Saudi authorities."

Adequate Treatment, Free Drugs

Pilgrims who visited any of NAHCON's medical facilities received adequate and prompt treatments. Many of them testified to the efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery rendered by the medical team.

While some pilgrims with minor cases were given free drugs at the pharmacy after being attended to by doctors, others with critical issues were admitted.

Dr. Galadima said, "Those with critical conditions were admitted at observation rooms for a maximum of 48 hours. When they got better, we discharged them to their respective state accommodations. If they require further care, we refer them to any of the specialist hospitals within the Kingdom."

The Head of Medical Mission to the Kingdom, however, said Nigerian pilgrims do not pay for the drugs at the point of care, noting that it's part of their Hajj package.

"The treatment we give in our facilities is borne by Nigeria. It's part of their package and they've paid for it. The treatment offered by Saudi authorities is borne by the Saudi authorities," he noted.

Death of ten pilgrims

Despite the efficiency of the healthcare services offered by the team, ten Nigerians were confirmed dead as at the time of filling this report on Wednesday, August 12.

The names of the deceased are Hajiya Aisha Ahmed (Nasarawa): Lamidi Atanda (Borno); Sheikh Abdulrahman Maigona (Gombe); Alhaji Abdulhadi Adam

(Plateau); Alhaji Mamman Nasiru Zungeru (Niger), Sani Idris Mohammed (Kano),

Hajiya Hasiya Aminu and Maryam Ahmed Igabi, both from Kaduna, and Mallam Garba Yakubu, NAHCON Coordinator, Sokoto Zone.

The deceased were all buried in the Holy Land, except for Alhaji Adewale Yakub, who died and buried in Dubai while returning to Lagos, Nigeria with his wife, after successfully completing the Hajj exercise in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Galadima expressed sadness over their deaths and condoled with their families and friends back home in Nigeria.

He said that their deaths were painful, adding that the figure was below the number of deaths recorded in the 2019 Hajj, where no fewer than 14 Nigerian pilgrims died.

According to him, "At this time in 2019, we had lost about 14 pilgrims.

Though painful, we thank God that we have so far not recorded a higher number of deaths compared to a similar period during the 2019 hajj. May Allah forgive all of their shortcomings and admit them to Al-Jannah Firdaus. Ameen".

Hajj 2022, A Success

The medical team considered the 2022 Hajj operation a success despite being an emergency pilgrimage as described by the NAHCON chairman.

According to Dr. Galadima, It was indeed an emergency Hajj because at first, we did not know there would be Hajj until it was very close. The preparations had been quite tedious. We had delay in the beginning of the operation due to the late arrival of drugs but we praise Allah for His guidance and the team has been wonderful.

"Since then, we've not witnessed any out-of-stock. There have been constant drug supplies. About 602,478 drugs have been dispensed to pilgrims within four weeks, and we're not stopping until the end of the exercise.

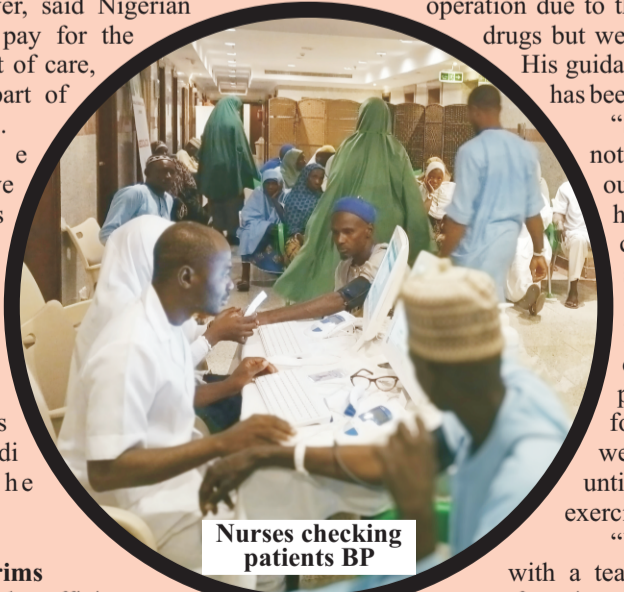
"We came here with a team of competent professionals who are temporarily registered with the Saudi ministry of health. The teamwork has been great and the support received from the NAHCON management, exemplary. Generally speaking, we are happy and grateful for the successful operation and handling of the 2022 Hajj," he added.



Dr. Galadima



Patients waiting to see Doctors



Nurses checking patients BP

How my husband died on our way back to Nigeria, by mother of 4

One of the pilgrims at the just concluded 2022 Hajj, Alhaja Zaynab Adewale has narrated how her husband, Alhaji Adewale Yakub died in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on their way back to Nigeria from Makkah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mrs Adewale was in a sombre mood when she spoke with *Muslim News* on her harrowing experience.

The deceased, Alhaji Adewale is a native of Kwara State, based in Lagos State. He left behind 4 children, with the oldest being 15 years old, including a little baby.

The couple left for hajj from Lagos, Nigeria through a Private Tour Operator, and had successfully completed the necessary rites.

According to the wife, her late husband though took ill at Makkah, his health had stabilised after visiting Al-Azeez Health Centre where he was treated and discharged.

Muslim News, however, gathered that on their way back home, Alhaji Adewale collapsed and later died at the airport in Dubai where they wanted to board a connecting flight to Lagos, Nigeria.

"We performed the hajj together. We went through a private tour operator in Lagos. After the hajj rites, he felt unwell, so we visited one health centre in Makkah and he was given medical attention. We also waited for about one week after the hajj before we proceeded on our journey back home," wife of the deceased recounted their experience.

"On our way back home, we boarded a first plane at Emirates Airline from Jeddah to Dubai. When we got to Dubai, we had about 9 hours stopover at the airport. We started the journey on Monday, July 18 when we landed in Dubai.

"We wanted to board our connecting flight to Nigeria the second day around 10:30am. So, on that day at the airport, the announcement came that our flight would be leaving soon. I tapped my husband for us to start heading for the plane. He walked about 5 to 10 feet and then slumped.

"When he collapsed, I shouted for help, and officials of the airport came around. They tried to administer oxygen on him, but unfortunately he didn't respond. They tried to rush him to the nearest hospital in the main town, Rasheed Hospital in Dubai. Before getting there however, he passed away," she revealed.

Confirming the incident, another pilgrim that went through the same private tour operator said he was a witness to how Alhaji Adewale collapsed at the airport.

According to the witness, "The deceased was given First Aid treatment at the

airport before taken to the hospital where he died. The CEO of the Agency, who was with the family all through, immediately communicated the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) on the incident via a formal letter."

The copy of the letter received by *Muslim News* read in part, "We wish to inform you officially of the death of one of our pilgrims which occurred at the airport in Dubai on their way back from Saudi Arabia on the 18/19th of July 2022 after a successful Hajj operation.

"They were about to board the flight from Dubai to Lagos when one of them, Alhaji Adewale Yakub slumped and was given first aid treatment at the airport. He was eventually taken to the hospital where he died. He was travelling with his wife Hajia Oluyemi Adewale. She is currently in Dubai until the matter on where the husband is to be buried is resolved," the letter read.

Meanwhile, Alhaja Adewale said she faced a tough time at Dubai to get her deceased husband buried, adding his death came as a great shock to the family.

According to her, the deceased husband was full of life and did not show any serious illness at the point of departure to Makkah.

"It was a tough time for me at Dubai after his death. I spent about a week there. When something like this happens, the hospital will say they need consent from the parent or the brother. So, I had to call home and all that to get the consent. It really delayed his burial.

"His death was a great shock to everyone. This was someone that didn't show any sign of sickness. Before the family could get themselves together and come to terms with his death, it took time. So, the consent to bury him in Dubai was delayed.

"They later released the consent on Friday, July 22. You know the time difference between Dubai and Nigeria is about 3 hours. So, before we could take further actions, it was the following Monday, 25. He was eventually buried in Dubai."

Alhaja Adewale said it was not the first time her late husband would be observing Hajj, but he decided to observe the pilgrim with her being a first timer.

She told *Muslim News* that the 2022 Hajj was not too stressful for her.

"I feel the crowd wasn't much because my husband told me when he performed his own, the crowd was so much and the stress was so much. For this one, there was crowd too, but not like previous ones. So, it was not too stressful for me."

After the burial of Alhaji Adewale Yakub at Dubai where he died, according to Islamic rites, the wife whom they went on Hajj together has returned to her late husband's family house in Lagos, Nigeria.

Muslim News gathered that in total, 10 Nigerian pilgrims died during just concluded Hajj.



Alhaji Yakub

Hajj 2022: Sheikh Adamu Abdullahi speaks on role of Ulama

Pioneer National Amir (President) of the National Council of Muslim Youths Organisation (NACOMYO), Sheikh Adamu Abdullahi has commended the Chief Executive Officer of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, NAHCON, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan for the successful 2022 Hajj exercise in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Abdullahi, while speaking exclusively with *Muslim News* in Makkah, described the exercise as a crash programme, noting that despite the limited time for planning, NAHCON was still able to organise an impressive Hajj operation.

Muslim News gathered that over 41,000 Nigerians made up the total figure of 899,000 pilgrims worldwide that performed this year's pilgrimage after two years of hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with great impacts on global economy and religious practices.

Sheikh Abdullahi being a member of the NAHCON Ulama'u team at the just concluded Hajj, acknowledged the performance of the Commission under the leadership of Alhaji Hassan, saying he deserves commendation for managing the emergency.

He said, "Normally, Hajj is planned over a period of one year; right from the beginning of the year, the planning continues up to the period of the Hajj. But this one, the signal that the Hajj would be conducted was given about three months to Hajj. So, all that happened in the planning and organisation of this Hajj was what we may call a crash programme."

"It was actually a very wonderful performance by NAHCON to have been able to organise something that takes a year to plan within a period of three months. Alhamdulillah, the successes recorded are commendable. One has to commend NAHCON, seeing the circumstances they found themselves."

"I am personally not surprised because the Chairman is someone I have known for about 30 years on Islamic activism. He was Amirul Hajj in Lagos. He

was Chairman of Osun State Pilgrims Board. He served as one of the officers of the NASFAT Hajj Organisation and so on.

"He also has a competent team. Most of the Commissioners at NAHCON were former secretaries of Hajj Boards in their states. He met a team of experienced officers who have been working on Hajj exercise for years. From the day he was appointed, he came with a lot of zeal to work for the Commission."

"Unfortunately, the first challenge was that Hajj was not conducted for two years and when it was conducted, it came as a crash programme. So, in all, one has to commend NAHCON and pray to Allah to increase them in wisdom so that next year's Hajj would be better."

Sensitising pilgrims

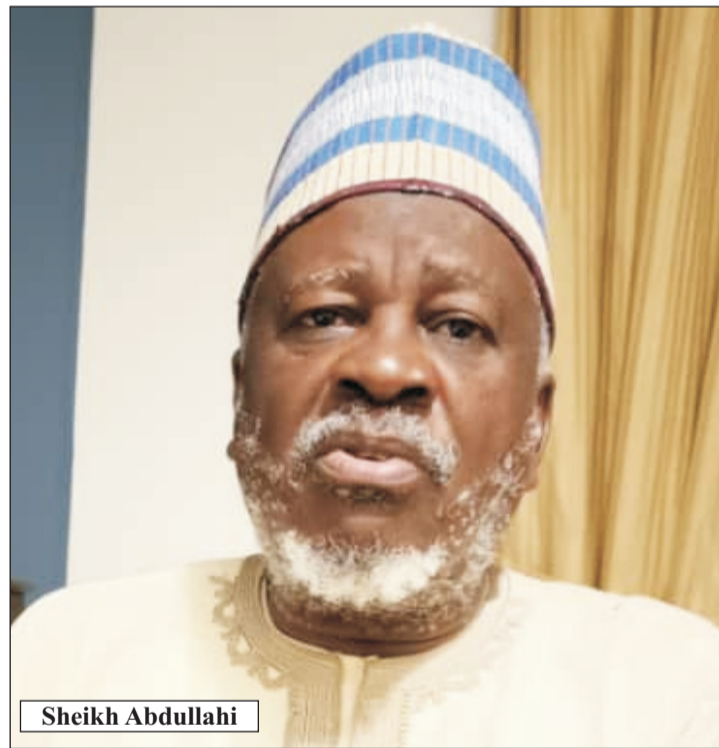
Narrating the efforts of the Ulama Team at the 2022 Hajj exercise, the scholar, who is also a staff of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (UDUS), explained that they took charge of sensitisation and enlightenment of the pilgrims right from the airport in Nigeria down to Saudi Arabia.

"Whoever happened to follow the platform of the National Ulama Team will find that they did a lot in sensitising the pilgrims, right from the airport in Nigeria. And then in Madinah. They went from house to house of the pilgrims in many states to sensitise them on the issue of Hajj, and even accompanied them to the various visits conducted in Madinah. Coming back here to

Makkah, the Ulama sensitised the pilgrims at various tents and led the prayers at various tents. They enlightened the Hujjaj on what they were supposed to do.

"In Makkah also, they did a programme on *What Next After Hajj*, as they

strove to inform the pilgrims on the lessons to derive from Hajj and make part of their lives so that when they return home, the effect of their performance of Hajj will be apparent in their day to day activities," he added.



Sheikh Abdullahi

My thoughts on Hajj 2022 - Imam Fuad Adeyemi

The National Imam of Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society, Imam Fuad Adeyemi has bared his thoughts on the 2022 pilgrimage, which has been described as 'emergency' Hajj due to Saudi Arabia's short notice to participating countries.

Imam Adeyemi, who is the immediate past Commissioner, (Southwest) National Hajj Commission of Nigeria in an exclusive chat with *Muslim News* in Makkah grouped his thoughts about the Hajj exercise into three aspects.

"I will group my thoughts on this year's Hajj into three thematic areas. One, the pilgrims. Two, the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, and three, Saudi Arabia itself," he began.

Pilgrims need more education on social behaviour

According to Imam Adeyemi, there was largely a sense of urgency on the part of pilgrims considering the break in Hajj in the past two years.

He said this led to impatience and violation of social etiquettes because pilgrims just wanted to do things the way they feel it should be done.

"People became impatient. They don't actually know what they are coming to do precisely. In the area of management, we need to increase the awareness of, and education about Hajj. Education about Hajj should not only be in the spiritual aspect. It also should involve the social aspect: relationship with others, how do you buy things, how do you use the toilet, how do you change your money, how do you join a bus. All these are important. Thank God, NAHCON is trying to establish a Hajj Institute which I believe, if it comes to fruition, will make a lot of difference."

"We should create a system in which 20 to 25 people should be attached to a guide right from home. And they would be trained in every aspect of Hajj. What I mean by every aspect of Hajj are spiritual aspect, social, interactive and personal aspects, even personal hygiene. They should be groomed extremely well. If we don't do that, we will continue to have problems. We have not had enough training. Only some private tour operators are doing excellently well in this regard."

"NAHCON should enforce it. All



Imam Adeyemi

states should come together and have proper training. Although this is an emergency Hajj, the training and education were grossly inadequate. You see first timers with nobody to guide them. They don't even know who to call. I think in each tent or group, there should be a table where questions could be asked."

Paradise is the reward for Hajj

The Chief Imam of Al-Habibiyyah Society said the reward for performing Hajj is Jannah (Paradise), noting it is the peak of ibaadah in the life of a Muslim.

He said pilgrims must realise that what makes the difference is their noble character and sound approach to every aspect of life, and not their caps, long robes, jilbaab or niqab, saying they must pass through reformation after performing Hajj.

"He who performs Hajj without arguments and disputations or fight, there is no other reward for such person than paradise. The Prophet (SAW) said he who performs Hajj without quarrel, and without fight, will return home like a day-old baby. It means such a person will be a born-again!"

"When you return home, you should reflect on what you did in Hajj. Hajj is not meant for showing off. Hajj is the peak of ibaadah in the life of a Muslim. So on return, people around you should see in you that you have passed through a kind of reformation. If nobody says anything positive about your behaviour or relationship subsequently, then you should know you have achieved nothing."

"People should be able to see reformation wrought by Hajj in you. Your cap is not what makes you an Alhaji. What makes you an Alhaji is the difference of your character and approach. If those things do not reflect in you, then, you have not done anything."

Read full article on: www.muslimnews.com.ng

Chief Imam of Imo hails NAHCON, says south-south, south-east quotas utilised

The Chief Imam of Imo State, Barr. Sheikh Suleiman Yusuf Njoku has hailed NAHCON, saying the Commission deserves commendation even though the exercise was not hundred percent perfect.

Speaking with *Muslim News* in Makkah, the Imam who represented the southeast on the Ulama Team recalled that there were initially doubts whether the 2022 Hajj would hold or not, considering that the religious exercise had been restricted since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to him, "You know there was a lot of doubts whether the Hajj would hold or not. So, I commend the efforts of the Chairman, National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Barr. Kunle Hassan. I feel he has done a lot and offered his best. As human, I think he couldn't have done more than he has done."

"Most of the pilgrims were airlifted, while a few others were not airlifted due to time constraint. So, Alhaji Hassan has done his best and I commend NAHCON for their

immense efforts toward the Hajj exercise because of the short preparation time. It cannot be 100 percent! It has been a very interesting experience," he said.

Barrister Njoku revealed that all pilgrims from the zone he represented (southeast) made the 2022 Hajj, saying that they were successfully airlifted to Saudi Arabia and had a hitch-free exercise.

"From my state, according to the information I have, we got 20 slots. That means, 20 pilgrims came from

Imo State. For other states, I think Ebonyi had 51. Altogether, for the Southeast, the number was about 150. I don't think anyone from southeast missed the Hajj. Everyone was airlifted."

Discrimination against Muslims in Southeast

Imam Njoku also spoke on the discrimination against Islam in the Southeast, saying attacks on Muslims are mostly borne out of ignorance.

Read full article on: www.muslimnews.com.ng



Barr. Njoku

Lagos debunks N47m fraud allegation

● Only 364 pilgrims pay \$150 each for sacrificial lamb



L-R: Special Adviser to the Governor on Islamic matters, Alh. Ahmad Jebe; The Hon. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Prince Anofiu Olanrewaju Elegushi and the Board Chairman, Engr. Shakir Ayinde Gafar at the Press Conference held on Friday 15th July, 2022 at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Lagos State Commissioner for Home Affairs, Prince Anofiu Olanrewaju Elegushi has joined other top officials of the State to refute as mischievous, false and untrue the allegation that the State pilgrims were forced to pay a higher amount for hady (animal sacrifices) at the just concluded 2022 Hajj in Saudi Arabia.

Prince Elegushi denied the allegation while speaking with the media on Friday at the Lagos House, Kingdom of the Saudi Arabia, where he led other top officials of the state to give account of stewardship on Hajj 2022 operations.

The meeting which was attended by some selected media including Muslim News, was also meant to announce its scheduled flight arrangements back to Lagos, starting from Sunday, July 17.

An online medium had recently alleged that the State officials

defrauded its pilgrims to the tune of N47 million during hady, otherwise known as sacrificial rams, one of the compulsory rites of Hajj.

The medium claimed that the officials collected 555 Saudi Riyals from each of the 1,672 Pilgrims for the Hady (sacrificial rams) but employed the service of a Saudi Arabia collaborator who was given 300 Saudi Riyals.

They claimed the Lagos officials led by the Commissioner for Home Affairs and Special Adviser to the Governor on Islamic Matters, Jebe Abdullahi Ahmed, pocketed the remaining 255 Saudi Riyals on each pilgrim, equivalent to N47 million.

But the Commissioner at the press conference held on Friday swiftly debunked the story. He said it's not true that the Board collected money from all the pilgrims, adding that only 364 pilgrims out of the 1,672 (sacrificial rams) slaughtered by all pilgrims on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah.

“Apart from the price of the hady, which is within the region of 400 riyals, the 150 dollars we collected comprised other services like ziyarah (visitation expenses), both in Makkah and Madinah. It is not the government that pays for ziyarah. It's the Hady (sacrificial rams) but employed the service of a Saudi Arabia collaborator who was given 300 Saudi Riyals from the pilgrims to make proper arrangements. Why? It is because some of our pilgrims in previous operations fell in the hands of people that duped them, collected their money and did not even visit the slaughter farm, not to talk of slaughtering any ram for them.

Speaking further, Prince Elegushi said, “It is a norm that the board always collects the ram money from the pilgrims to make proper arrangements. Why? It is because some of our pilgrims in previous operations fell in the hands of people that duped them, collected their money and did not even visit the slaughter farm, not to talk of slaughtering any ram for them.

“In order to guard against this, that is why the board decided then, not even now, that they would be the one that would now appoint an authorised agent that would go and slaughter for all Lagos pilgrims.

“In this operation, we gave them options. We did not even force it on them. We said it is optional. If you don't want to slaughter, you have other things to do to cover up for it. You can go fasting. So you are free from the slaughtering of a ram. So, it was optional. They also had the option of patronising any agent that they preferred.

“If they want to go through the board, that was fine. The board would do the appropriate thing. And if they didn't, we would have tried our best, should they fall into preying hands who dupe them. Till now, we are still maintaining that position. That's why we have that reduced figure of 364 pilgrims out of 1,672”.

Appreciating Gov. Sanwo-Olu; Deputy, Hamzat

Prince Elegushi thanked Almighty Allah for the successful Hajj exercise inspite of challenges, appreciating the Executive Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu and his Deputy, Dr. Femi Hamzat for their moral and financial support.

According to him, “We thank Almighty Allah. We also thank the Governor of Lagos State for giving us the opportunity to partake in this year's hajj operation. And also for giving us all the necessary support, both moral and financial. He has been so good to us.

“He has been so helpful to us. Even on Arafat Day, he took his time to chat with the pilgrims. They were all happy that he made a video call. Even the Deputy Governor did same. He made a video call to wish the pilgrims well.

“I am thanking them on behalf of the board for their support. I pray that Almighty Allah will continue to guide and be with them. May Almighty Allah take them across what they are looking at right now which is the second term in government. In Shaa Allah, we will have cause to glorify the name of Allah at the end of the elections”, he said.

Malicious report, an handiwork of detractors – Hon. Jebe

Honourable Jebe, who was also accused in the report, said such

malicious report is the figment of the imagination of the detractors, who are envious of the State's achievements at the just concluded Hajj.

According to him, “If you are doing well, your enemy will never be happy. They will stop at nothing just to get at you because they don't want you to record that success. They must have prepared for other areas, but maybe they discovered that all areas are well covered. So, the next thing to do is to use the media to damage our personalities.

“It's so sad that people can be doing that, lying against fellow human beings, trying to destroy somebody that every pilgrim is praying for. It's sad, but it is in the system. News will come. You will come out to say confirm or disclaim it. So, my own comment is, it is never and can never be true. They are just trying to damage us, of which they cannot succeed.

“I'm not so surprised. You should know we are in a strong political period. So, you should expect more of this. We are ready”, he clarified, corroborating Prince Elegushi's earlier submission that no pilgrim from Lagos was compelled to pay for 'Hady, adding that those who paid weren't shortchanged

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Islamic Matters said there was cordial relationship between the Board and pilgrims, before, during and even after Hajj exercise, adding that the board was ready to render necessary assistance to the pilgrims.

“As you can see, we are all with them. We are living in the same building with them, including all the board members and even the commissioner. So, the information they need were given at the right time. They can access even our rooms to ask questions. Information is flowing adequately.

“If you go downstairs, you see them. We've arranged our bags (for the airlifting back to Lagos). We've taken measurement of the weight of our bags and everybody is set now to be airlifted back to Lagos,” he added.

No fewer than 430 intending pilgrims from Lagos State have landed safely in Madinah to perform the Year 2022 Hajj exercise in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The pilgrims left the shore of Nigeria through the Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA) yesterday, at 11.45pm with Flynas Airline XY 5010, a Saudi Arabia based airline. The first batch comprised of 170 male and 260 females respectively.

Speaking with the press on his impression about the Inaugural flight being his first experience, the Hon. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Prince Anofiu Olanrewaju Elegushi expressed his gratitude to Allah that, after two consecutive years of break in Hajj operations due to COVID-19 pandemic, the international pilgrims are having the privilege of performing the spiritual exercise once again.

Elegushi urged them to be good ambassadors of Lagos State in particular and Nigeria in general and be law abiding in all their deeds and conducts in the Holy land, praying that Allah would see them through.

He emphasised that

First batch of Lagos pilgrims arrive in Madinah for 2022 Hajj

everything are in order and the pilgrims happy, adding that the second flight of another 430 intending pilgrims would depart Nigeria on Wednesday June 15, 2022

via the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Ikeja, Lagos. On his part, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Islamic matters, Hon. Ahmad Abdullahi Jebe,

said as a proactive state, Lagos had equipped its pilgrims through the weekend lectures and other engagements in the area of spiritual practice and other activities.

He added that the State had put everything in place to ensure their comfort and welfare in the Holy land, saying the pilgrims would enjoy their stay.

Lagos completes 2022 Hajj operation



Cross-section of Lagos pilgrims during NAHCON's delegation visit to their tent in Mina, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Lagos State Government completed the 2022 Hajj operation with the arrival of the last batch of 36 pilgrims from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, August 3, 2022.

The 36 pilgrims who are on board a Flynas Airline with number XY 7502 which landed at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Ikeja, was led by the Board Secretary, Mr. Hakeem Kosoko.

It would be recalled that the State pilgrims began their journey back home after the completion of the Hajj rites with the first batch of 430 pilgrims on Sunday July 17, 2022. This was

followed by the second batch of another 426 pilgrims on Tuesday, July 19, 2022 respectively.

The third batch of 416 pilgrims also arrived on Friday, July 22, 2022 while the fourth batch of 347 came in on Wednesday, July 27.

In order to ensure that non of its pilgrims was delayed in the foreign land unnecessarily, the remaining pilgrims were brought into the country via the same airline in the fifth batch with 10 pilgrims on Sunday, July 31, 2022 while the sixth and final batch of 36 pilgrims arrived today Wednesday, August 3, 2022.

In all, the total number of pilgrims airlifted by the State Government to the holy land for the spiritual exercise and successfully brought back home safely is 1,665.

Weeks after the conclusion of the 2022 Hajj exercise, state pilgrims boards, tour operators and other stakeholders, including Ulama' have continued to recount their experiences.

One of these stakeholders is Alhaji AbdulHameed Solate, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Hajj Mabruur Ventures Limited.

Relating his experience, Alhaji Solate told Muslim News that the 2022 Hajj was one of the best the venture has embarked upon in recent years because they were able to serve their clients better and have since been getting positive feedback from their clients and the society at large.

He said the 2022 Hajj was quite unique because it came after COVID-19, whereby guests of Allah from outside Saudi Arabia were allowed to perform Hajj rites.

"There are a lot of changes that have gone on in terms of the operations of Hajj. However, there were a lot of issues, perhaps, because of the changes, and then being the first major Hajj where people from outside Saudi Arabia were allowed to perform Hajj. So we expected a lot of differences, compared to the previous ones. A lot of other things have been introduced to develop the operations and manage the crowd, compared to what it was before," he said.

50 slots for Hajj Mabruur

Like other private operators, Muslim News learnt that Hajj Mabruur also got just 50 slots from NAHCON.

Alhaji Solate said the quota was below the expectation of the venture, but it had to be accepted

How we coped with challenges, Hajj Mabruur Boss, says 'Hajj 2022, one of our best so far'

since it was the reality on the ground.

According to him, "We tried to make use of it, maximise the number, and still offered total quality services to our pilgrims.

"I can say that for us at Hajj Mabruur, this is one of the best in terms of the way we handled our pilgrims. We had very positive feedback, perhaps, because the number was small. It was easier for us to manage. Due to the scenario that was going on around us, in terms of high cost of commodities, we had to put more efforts and pay more attention to the hospitality side of our business.

"Our slogan is, Simply Hospitality, Truly Spirituality. So, both were taken care of but we paid a lot of attention to the hospitality side, so that the pilgrims would not feel they had spent so much without getting value. We were interested in giving them value and we were meticulous about it. And at the end of the day, they really got the value, based on the feedback we've had. They were very cooperative as they followed the set guidelines and the plans we had put in place operationally. It was a marvelous experience for us as a tour operator and for our pilgrims."

How Hajj Mabruur tackled feeding challenge at Mina

Speaking on the experience at Mina, especially with feeding,



Alhaji Solate

Alhaji Solate said pilgrims who went through Hajj Mabruur also faced the challenge. He described the experience as tough, but said there

were later improvements in some areas.

According to him, "The challenges at Mina ranged from the

nature of the tents, the beddings given to us (by the Mu'assasa who took charge) were below standard. In fact, the last time we used that kind of mattress was about seven, eight years ago. We were expecting improvements but we were moved backwards in terms of the standard. What we used to have were beddings that are foldable where you can relax and recline, but that was not the case. People were simply packed.

One would have expected that because of COVID-19 which was the reason the number was reduced, there would be enough space but Nigerian pilgrims were put at a spot farther away from the Jamrah. So, there wasn't any difference. We expected that because the number was reduced, we would have been placed closer to the Jamrah. But that was not the case. So, there were challenges here and there.

"We also had the challenge of food. The meals were not what we expected. In fact, we could say it was even worse than what we used to have for breakfast, especially on the first and second day. So, it was a very tough experience for us," he noted.

The MD/CEO, however, said that they were able to tackle the feeding challenge at Mina because they had a Plan B, since they have always prepared their pilgrims ahead for eventualities.

"At Hajj Mabruur, we focused on two major things which are our core values: hospitality and spirituality. We weren't expecting that, but we were prepared ahead for whatever eventualities that could arise. Read full interview on muslimnews.com.ng

I haven't witnessed this type of Hajj before, says Qibla Int'l Chief

Also speaking with Muslim News in Makkah was the Managing Director/CEO of Qibla International Services Limited, Alhaji Abdulfattah Adeniyi AbdulMajeed, who like other stakeholders, described the 2022 Hajj as a "special" and an "emergency" operation due to the limited time for planning.

Alhaji Abdulfattah said the National Hajj Commission, state agencies, tour operators and other Hajj stakeholders worked under intense pressure to ensure the success of the exercise.

The Qibla International boss noted that he had never experienced a situation where Hajj operation was planned in less than a month, thereby saying that the recent Hajj cannot be compared to the preceding ones.

According to him, "Never in my own history of Hajj operations have we planned and executed Hajj in less than a month. The execution of Hajj usually takes close to a year. There is always a programme of activities, when the airline should get their slots, when the tour operators should get their slots, when they should have finished booking the flight, when payment should be made, when the last flight should come in and so on. All these are scheduled by the Saudi authorities and NAHCON.

"But we did all those in less than a month. Never in my own Hajj operations experience have we had that. So, I cannot compare the normal Hajj which we had up to 2019 and a special Hajj for all intents and purposes."

The former President of



Alhaji Abdulfattah

AHOUN said it's therefore unfair for anyone to start talking of what NAHCON team should have addressed or not in a situation where they were choked.

"What you should do in a year, you are doing it in less than a month. The states are requesting airlift but they must meet the requirements of the NCAA. NCAA on the other hand must also meet the international standard. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) will transfer money because we cannot bring

were actually beyond their control," he added.

Alhaji Abdulfattah also said that the poor feeding of Nigerian pilgrims handled by the Mu'assasa was a general issue which also affected his pilgrims – fifty in number.

According to him, the Mu'assasa, which took charge of feeding at Mina appointed restaurants that did not meet standard.

"It was a general issue that

affected all states and tour operators. I think the NAHCON Chairman held a meeting with the Mu'assasa, and they acknowledged the fact that the restaurants they appointed failed and did not fulfill their obligations."

NAHCON does not collect money from pilgrims

The MD/CEO also cleared NAHCON from allegations of collecting money from pilgrims, noting that it is a misinformation.

He said NAHCON only takes money from state agencies and tour operators which are paid directly to the CBN.

He also dismissed claims of the commission cancelling pilgrims' visas, saying it doesn't have control over visa issuance.

Alhaji Abdulfattah therefore charged NAHCON, state agencies, tour operators, among others to ramp up efforts at educating and enlightening the public, as many pilgrims blamed NAHCON for what it has no control over.

"We should tell ourselves the home truth that when you work under tension, there is bound to be mistakes, whether from tour operators, the states or NAHCON or Mu'assasa.

"In terms of information, there was limited time for passing information. Last year, we prepared, it was at the last minute that the Hajj was cancelled. This year, there were doubts of the Hajj holding. The question was, to be or not to be. The time to pass information to the pilgrims was just not there.

"However, going forward, NAHCON should ensure that

information is made available. The states should also not be economical with the truth. Let them know what's handled by the states. For instance, a pilgrim said she paid directly to NAHCON; NAHCON doesn't take money from individuals. They only take money from either the states which is paid to the CBN or from tour operators which is also paid to the CBN. The money is domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria.

"Another person said NAHCON cancelled his visa. NAHCON doesn't control your visa. You must fulfil all the conditions given to you. I will use myself as an operators for example. The moment the money has reached my IBAN, and on my IBAN, I have fulfilled the conditions of accommodation, logistics, tent, everything will just show green. I will just print my visa out. I cannot even cancel my visa just as I cannot withdraw money from my IBAN.

"Therefore, there is need for us to do more in the area of educating the public. The tour operators should do more on information to their pilgrims and not misinform them. Things that people place at the doorstep of NAHCON that do not belong to them. NAHCON doesn't issue visa. NAHCON doesn't collect money from pilgrims. It is the tour operators that collect money and pay through the RTGS into the CBN, and that's all. All of us should now brace up. At least we have a year to plan for Hajj 2023. May Allah spare our lives to witness many more so that the lapses observed during this one would be properly addressed."

NAHCON tasks Saudi on prompt dissemination of Hajj information

– Appreciates royal family for dedication in serving guests



Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan and Ahmed Sindi

The Chairman/CEO, National Hajj Commission, NAHCON, Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan has charged the Saudi Authorities on Hajj affairs known as Mutawifs to ensure quick supply of information and arrangements for the next Hajj in order to have a seamless exercise.

Alhaji Hassan stated this while speaking at the closing ceremony for 1443.A.H Hajj season organised by Company of Mutawifs for Pilgrims from Non-Arab Countries held at Bader Grand Hall, Makkah on Tuesday, July 19.

Present at the event were the leadership and representatives of Hajj missions in Africa non-Arab countries.

NAHCON chairman who spoke on behalf of all Hajj Missions in Africa stated that quick release of information would have immense impact on Hajj preparations and arrangements for African pilgrims of non-Arab countries.

He said: "Providing us with essential information will enable us to effectively put in place all required arrangements in good time and with relative ease. It is obvious how lack of the timely essential information resulted in the delay and or rather hasty and in some instances, difficulties experienced this year by some of our member countries.

"Many times, we only get to read about vital information relating to our duties on social media and other unofficial news channels. As those saddled with responsibility of organising Hajj for our pilgrims, we appeal to you to make relevant information available to us first hand and with the urgency it merits as well".

He stated that the Memorandum of Understanding, MoU signing, which signifies the commencement of preparatory activities for Hajj did not take place physically this year and appealed that this should not continue. He urged the Mutawif to bring the issue before the Council in order to accord it the seriousness it

deserves.

He expressed appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques: His Royal Highness, King Salman bin Abdulaziz and His Highness, the Crown Prince, Muhammad Bin Salman, for their dedication in serving the Guests of Ar-Rahmayn well despite the complexities involved.

"On behalf of the entire African pilgrims' Affairs Offices of non-Arab countries, I wish to congratulate all of us on the resounding success achieved in this year's Hajj- 1443AH. I pray that Allah (SWT) accepts our pilgrimage as acts of Ibaadah. May He forgive our sins and bless the sacrifices we collectively made towards success of this year's Hajj. At the end, may He return us all safely to our respective countries."

He also thanked the Management Council of the Company for the upgrade of facilities at Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

Earlier, the chairman of the Board, Ahmed Sindi in his speech assured that all the arrangements put in place were not for commercial gains, adding the next hajj will be a departure from the present situation.

"You have seen that this hajj was an improvement of the last and we hope to make it better. We can't do it alone, we have to interact with you and seek your cooperation.

He also stated that the Ministry of Hajj has restructured most vital areas of Hajj services with a view to improving on them.

"Our aim is to make the pilgrims happy. We will gather youths with good ideas and initiatives to serve pilgrims. We will reward any one of them that makes pilgrims happy," Sindi said.

Highlights of the ceremony were the rendition of poems by the body Hajj Advisor, Abdullah Alawii; a traditional folklore performance by an Arab troupe as well as presentation of gifts to NAHCON and all participating African non-Arab Countries.

NAHCON concludes post-Hajj 2022 journey, begins plans for Hajj 2023

Nigeria's last flight for 2022 Hajj, an Azman Air with 319 pilgrims from Kaduna and Kano and officials from the various states and NAHCON departed King Abdul Aziz International Airport Jeddah, on Sunday, August 7, 2022 at about 12: 00 pm.

The Commission's Acting Director, Public Affairs, Hajiya Fatima Usara Sanda, in a statement, said the trip signifies end of 2022 Hajj Operations from Nigeria.

The last flight is coming six days ahead of deadline of Hajj airlift as set by the Saudi authorities, and three days ahead of NAHCON's planned deadline being 10th of August 2022. For over three weeks of the operation, only two flights cancellation were recorded with maximum delay of six hours.

In a ceremony to mark the end of the operation, the NAHCON Chairman Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan attributed success of the return trip to Almighty. He thanked the federal government under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari for his tireless support to Hajj organization.

The Chairman acknowledged that there were challenges during the outbound trip from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia resulting from time constraint as well as other unforeseen hiccups such as the IBAN issue that affected some Tour Operators.

Nonetheless, this has spurred the Commission into taking lessons. He stressed that the Commission would commence early planning and would embark on prequalification of airlines sooner than later to allow the carriers to cross any unforeseen hurdles in good time. He also stressed that the Commission would ensure that any contractual agreement signed is fulfilled as agreed.

In another development, a dinner was organized on Saturday, August 6 in honour of NAHCON which marked beginning of the 2023 Hajj preparations.

Chairman of the Company of Mutawifs for Pilgrims from African Non-Arab Countries, Mr. Ahmad Sindi eulogized Nigerian Hajj mission as the single most important delegation to the company.

In his words, "Nigeria is very special to the company". He lamented that certain things were not done the way the company wanted but reassured that the pilgrims deserve better service and this they are ready to provide irrespective of cost.

Consequently, the NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Hassan made three formal requests at the occasion the first of which is timely communication on 2023 Hajj guidelines, second is a review of the feeding arrangement in Masha'ir, and the third is a request for quick resolution of the IBAN blockade that deterred some Tour Operators' pilgrims from participating in

the year's Hajj. The Chairman also raised the issue of insufficient space and proper marking of conveniences in Muna.

Responding, Mr Sindi assured NAHCON that 2023 Hajj will witness complete restructuring in contrast to this year's hasty arrangements. He also expressed confidence that the Hajj quota will return to status quo ante therefore recommended that NAHCON starts working on the original figure unless instructed otherwise.

He further informed that the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah had already engaged engineering companies on upgrade of facilities in Muna, Arafat and Muzdalifa. The upgrade will be carried out in phases. However, his company has sent out a proposal to carry out the upgrade in the interest of its pilgrims even if the upgrade will be only temporary before the phasal engineering project reaches our site.

The Mu'assasa Chairman revealed that the company will next year role out a scientific feeding plan that will take care of quantity, quality and the number of calories contained in the meal.

He also assured that there will be a pre delivery monitoring where compromise will not be tolerated at all unlike the situation this year which forced everyone to accept the available option. He acknowledged that indeed 2023 Hajj preparations has started with the hosting of NAHCON in the finest location in Jeddah.



ITS A Wrap!! Azman Air Maiden Hajj Operations was concluded in grand style as we returned the last batch of Muslim Pilgrims from Jeddah to Abuja, Kaduna and Kano on Sunday, August 7.

Jaiz Charity Foundation uplifts needy, less privileged families with N69.6m in Nigeria

Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation in June announced plans to disburse N69.6m to the needy and less privileged in six States of the Federation, including the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abuja, in 2022.

As at the time of filling this report on Monday August 15, the disbursement exercise has been held in six states namely: Lagos, Ondo, Sokoto, Kwara Bauchi, and Katsina.

Muslim News gathered that about N53.6 million has been disbursed among 377 beneficiaries, remaining over N13.1 million outstanding to be shared in Abuja on yet to be announced date, marking the grand finale of the 2022 Jaiz Foundation distribution.

Zakat, the third pillar of Islam, is an obligatory act upon all adult Muslims who are financially capable.

Below is the summary of how the Zakat funds have been shared in the five states during the period under review:

Lagos

No fewer than 79 beneficiaries received cheques and materials worth N9 million from Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation in Lagos, Southwest, Nigeria, as part of its efforts to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty among women and youths.

The flag-off of the 2022/1433AH Zakat distribution was done in Lagos on Thursday, June 16 via the enhancement of the economic wellbeing of the beneficiaries.

During the event at the Beleke Smith Memorial Mosque Hall, Surulere, materials such as industrial sewing machines, deep freezers, printers, among others, were distributed to artisans and individuals to grow their respective businesses.

We're committed to giving hope to the hopeless—Chairman

Addressing guests and beneficiaries on the occasion, Chairman, Jaiz Foundation, Mallam Adamu Bello, CFR, who was ably represented by Hajiya Zainab Abdurrahman, a Trustee of the Foundation, noted that a sum of N3.7m had earlier been disbursed for health related challenges to some individuals.

“Prior to this day, we had already disbursed over N3.7million to meet pressing medical needs of some beneficiaries recommended by some of our Zakat donors for urgent surgeries such as kidney transplant and hyperthyroidism among others which could not be delayed.

“Today (Wednesday), we are set to disburse the outstanding balance of N5.2million naira to 39 beneficiaries who are seriously in pains due to the adverse economic situation which has impacted negatively on the living conditions of the less privileged.

Ondo

Days after it successfully flagged-off Zakat distribution in Lagos, the Foundation moved to Akure, the Ondo State capital for the second phase of its annual disbursement exercise.

At the Akure Central Mosque Hall on Tuesday, June 21,



R-L: Alhaji Mukhtar Sani AbdulKadir, a Trustee of Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation, representing the Chairman of Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation (JCDF), Mallam Adamu Bello; Dr Abdullah Shuaib, CEO, JCDF and Mallam Muhammad Lawal Maidoki, Executive Chairman, Sokoto State Zakat and Endowment Commission (SOZECOM) presenting a grinding machine to a beneficiary

2022, the Foundation distributed five million, six hundred and twenty-five thousand Naira (N5,625,000) Zakat fund collected from well-meaning Nigerians and responsible corporate citizens to 55 beneficiaries for livelihood support and empowerment.

Muslim News gathered that though the Foundation had in 2018 distributed foodstuffs to fasting Muslims at the same venue in the month of Ramadan, yesterday's disbursement was the first of its kind to be held in the Sunshine State.

Established in April 2012 to carry out charitable and development activities across the length and breadth of the country, the Foundation, an NGO of Jaiz Bank PLC, is poised to complement the services and products of the Nigeria's pioneer non-interest bank in Ondo State.

The Foundation's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Abdullah Shuaib in his address, said, “Today, we are very pleased to bring another public good to our fellow brothers and sisters across some local governments of the state after the official commissioning of the pioneer branch of Jaiz Bank Plc on the 15th day of March, 2022 by Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, SAN, the governor of Ondo State.

“Permit me to mention that out of the aforementioned Zakat fund (N5,625,000), we had earlier distributed the sum of One Million Nine Hundred and Seventeen Thousand Naira (N1,917,000) at the head office to 4 beneficiaries of Ondo state extraction residing outside the state for economic empowerment and institutional support.

“The outstanding balance of Three Million Seven Hundred and

Eight Thousand Naira (N3,708,000) is the Zakat fund to be distributed to the remaining 51 beneficiaries at this gathering,” he explained.

Sokoto

Apart from disbursement of N6,500,000 for the Waqf School in Katsina held earlier in April, Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation on Wednesday, July 6, 2022 disbursed the sum of N5,599,000 to 80 beneficiaries in Sokoto state.

The disbursement was the first of its kind by the Foundation in the northwestern state reputed to be the seat of the caliphate, Muslim News findings have revealed.

The beneficiaries included students, sick persons, the poor, debt-ridden people, among others, who needed educational support, health assistance, economic empowerment,

debt relief and accommodation.

Ilorin, Kwara State

The Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation on Wednesday, July 20, 2022, moved its train to Kwara State in the North Central part of Nigeria to distribute N5.2 million Zakat funds among 64 beneficiaries.

Muslim News gathered that it was the first time the Foundation would be disbursing Zakat funds in Kwara State and it was done in partnership with the Al-Husnah Centre for Waqf Affairs, which put in place necessary arrangements for the programme.

Bauchi

Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation has disbursed the sum of N7,123,025.64 (Seven Million One Hundred and Twenty Three Thousand Twenty Five Naira and Sixty Four Kobo) from Zakat proceeds to 109 beneficiaries in Bauchi.

Held on Saturday, June 25, at the Bauchi Central Mosque, Bauchi, the beneficiaries received the Zakat Fund for health, educational support, debt relief and livelihood support, as well as startup packs for economic empowerment of some of the beneficiaries.

Dr. Shuaib said, “Of this number, we are set to distribute four sewing and grinding machines each for the development and enhancement of the socio-economic well-being of our people.

It was the 1st edition of the Zakat Distribution Ceremony of Jaiz Charity and Development Foundation for the year 1443AH corresponding to the year 2022 in the State.

The Companion ends 2022 Zakat distribution in six States, disburses 28 millions to Foundations, indigent Muslims

The National leadership of The Companion, an Association of Muslim men in Business and the Professions, has partnered with its Lagos District to disburse money and materials worth N19 million Zakat proceeds to faith-based Non-governmental organisations and indigent Muslims.

The event which held on Saturday, July 2, at the Shamsi Adisa Thomas Mosque Hall, Old Secretariat Road GRA Ikeja, Lagos, was the grand finale of the 2022 Zakat distribution of The Companion.

Muslim News gathered that the Organisation had held series of such empowerment programme in Kwara, Oyo, Cross Rivers, Osun, and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abuja, where over N9 million were disbursed to needy Muslims and non-governmental organisations.

Some of the beneficiaries who went home with cheque money ranging from 300,000 to 500,000 include individuals who need support in areas of education, health, welfare and business.

Notable charity organisations that benefitted from the distribution were FAJIM Medicare Foundation, Sakinah Medical Outreach, Sisters in the Deen Foundation (Sakeenah Orphanage



Kamil Olalekan, National President, The Companion (right), and Thabit Wale Sonaika, former President of the society (left), presenting cheque to a beneficiary, during the disbursement of N15 million Zakat proceeds to beneficiaries, in Lagos

Home), Association of Zakat & Waqf Operators in Nigeria (AZAWON), UNHCR for IDPs (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), and Coalition of Island Muslims.

The Companion which has branches across Nigeria is also a member of the Association of Zakat and Waqf Operators of Nigeria (AZAWON) with headquarters in Sokoto.

Zakat, an important pillar of Islam –Amir

In his welcome address, the

National Amir of The Companion, Engr. Kamil Olalekan urged for increased campaign and advocacy by members, noting Muslims should understand that Zakat is also an important pillar of

on the need to fulfil their Zakat and Sadaqah obligations. “This campaign is important in order to assist more Muslims to understand that Zakat is also central to Islam like other pillars of Islam such as Solah, Ramadan and Hajj. Furthermore, to remind our Muslim brothers and sisters that Zakat attracts benefit for those who pay it just as it is a source of punishment for those who are qualified to pay but fail to fulfil this obligation.”

The National Amir also appreciated the donors for their trust, while explaining that their contributions have been disbursed in a transparent manner. He similarly urged the beneficiaries to make judicious use of the support to earn the pleasure of Allah.

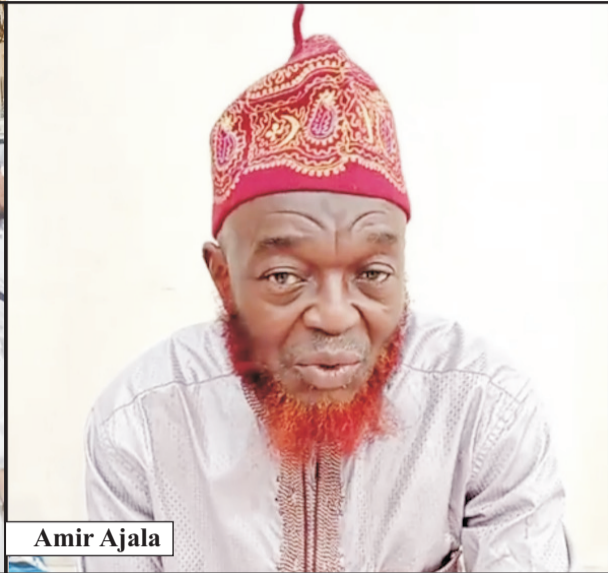
“This address will not be complete without saying a big thank you to our donors and contributors for their trust in us to discharge part of their Zakat obligation on their behalf. (Jazakallahu khaeran). We pray Allah to accept your Zakat and Sadaqah and reward you abundantly, both here and in the hereafter. I want to re-assure you that your trust is not misplaced. The administration and disbursement is done transparently and in line with shari'ah dictates,” he said.

Read full article on: www.muslimnews.com.ng

Nollywood actor, Femi Adebayo disregards advise, signs endorsement with another alcoholic brand



Adebayo



Amir Ajala

Barely days after renowned Muslim scholar, Amir Qamardeen Ajala admonished Femi Adebayo over his promotion of alcohol, the Nollywood actor, again defied the warning to sign an endorsement deal with another alcoholic company, Kubanah Whiskey. The actor, who performed the 2022 Hajj, announced this on his Instagram page on Wednesday, July 27.

The announcement of the new deal read: "Month of July ending on a promising note. Glad to be joining @kubanaWhiskey family as a brand ambassador."

His new endorsement is coming days after Amir Qamarudeen Ajala called on him to stop promoting alcohol, saying it is one of the greatest sins in Islam.

In the video titled, "Sincere advice to Brother Femi Adebayo to stop promoting alcohol", the Islamic scholar and TV Presenter called on Femi Adebayo, a Muslim, to halt advertising alcoholic content.

"This is a sincere advice to our brother," Amir Ajala said in the 33 minutes recording that has gone viral on social media, adding, "We aren't doing this video for fame or popularity or to criticise him, but it's our duty as Muslims to remind our brother of the dangers of promoting alcohol."

Amir Ajala noted in his admonition that it doesn't befit a Muslim actor of Femi Adebayo's caliber, who has performed Umrah, a lesser pilgrimage on several occasions, and Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, to be promoting alcohol.

According to him, "We have seen our brother performing umrah countless times. We also saw him at the just concluded Hajj. Back home in Nigeria, however, he is the same person that promotes an alcoholic drink (name withheld). He also invites other celebrities to promote the same alcohol."

"Maybe he doesn't know the Islamic verdict on what he is doing. It's, therefore, our responsibility to let him know since he identifies with Islam..."

Islam on drinking, dealing with alcohol

Muslim News Islamtainment findings revealed that consumption of alcohol and other forms of intoxicants are not only forbidden in Islam, direct association including promotion and advertisement is not permitted.

Dealing with intoxicants (such as beer, whiskey, gin etc) is one of the greatest sins in Islam, alongside the game of chance, idolatry, divining arrow, and according to Quran 5:90, they are considered as the handiwork of Shaytan, "So shun them so you may be successful".

Femi Adebayo as an ambassador of a beer brand

Although the respected Islamic cleric did not mention any alcoholic drink, investigation carried out by this medium showed that the Ilorin, Kwara State-born script interpreter did not only sign a deal with Kubanah Whiskey, he is also one of the ambassadors of premium lager, Trophy beer.

Since his unveiling in 2015, the former Special Adviser to the Kwara State Governor on Arts, Lifestyle and Tourism has been promoting the liquor drink, with his pictures on the brand's billboards in many cities across Nigeria, including Ilorin, a city reputed to be the home of Islam.

Muslim News Islamtainment gathered that some Islamic scholars in Ilorin metropolis were not pleased by the actor's alcohol billboards mounted in some strategic locations in the city, thereby reportedly met and convincing him to stop promoting beer in the area.

In February 2018, multiple media reported that the actor, a law graduate heeded their advise

following the replacement of his pictures with other brand ambassadors on the billboards.

"However, the actor is still modeling for the brand as his photos are still in use in other parts of the state", Nigerian Films was quoted in part.

After the incident, we can reliably confirm that "Jeli Oniso" as the actor is fondly called by fans was among the celebrities that performed at the Trophy Beer Concert held in April 2018 in Abeokuta, Ogun State capital.

While on stage to entertain fans and danced to the viral street song, Shaku-Shaku, the actor was seen in the video collecting a can of trophy beer and drinking from it, as he continued his performance. In the comment section of the post on Facebook, one user, Aderibigbe Sulaiman said, "Femi Adebayo Don shark trophy"

Femi Adebayo is also the host of the premium lager's weekly show on TV tagged: Honourable Tungba season 3, which commenced in May, 2022. The show features music and comedy performances from notable musicians and comedians, including leading fuji acts like Alhaji Wasiu Ayinde Marshal, Alhaji Sule Alao Malaika and Alhaji Wasiu Pasuma, who equally went for the Hajj 2022.

When contacted on Saturday, Amir Ajala urged the actor, Femi Adebayo and other Muslim celebrities who either drink or have relationship with alcoholic brands to discontinue, saying there is a great reward for those who shun what Allah has forbidden in this life and the hereafter.

He also called on Muslim scholars close to him and other celebrities to admonish them on Halaal (lawful) and Haraam (unlawful) in Islam.

May Allah ease his and our affairs by granting us halaal earnings. Ameen Ya Rab.

Nigeria: Wasiu Alabi Pasuma (Fuji)

Apart from Femi Adebayo, there were few other Nigerian entertainers, including musicians that performed this year's Hajj. Among them was Alhaji Wasiu Alabi, famously known as Pasuma Wonder.

The legendary Fuji singer who has been a regular visitor to the House of Allah shared series of videos with his numerous followers on Instagram and offered his heartfelt prayers for them.

On Sunday, July 3, Popcee

Aaliyah as Pasuma is fondly called by fans, posted a video of himself and others performing *Sai'*, the walking back and forth seven times between two small hills of Safa and Marwa.

After the completion of Hajj rites on Monday, July 11, the 54-year-old Fuji star returned to Makkah and was seen in Haram where he had gone to thank Allah. He posted on his Instagram page a video, with the caption: "May Allah accept our prayers. Ameen Ya Allah. I am blessed because I believe in God Almighty."



Pasuma

Entertainers who performed 2022 Hajj

India: Sana Khan (actor)

Former Indian actress, model and dancer, Sana Khan, who quit the world of entertainment for religious reasons saying she wants to serve humanity, recently completed her first Hajj - a key pillar of Islam, along with her husband, Mufti Anas Saiyad.

Sana, who is very active on social media, kept her followers updated with plethora of pictures and videos from her first ever Hajj experience. In one of her Instagram posts on Monday, July 4, she wrote, "I don't have words to express my feelings. May the Almighty Allah accept our Hajj and make it easy."

"This whole vibe of coming to Allah's house is so fulfilling. May Allah make it easy for everyone who is here performing their Umrah and Hajj," she posted.

On Thursday, July 7, she posted: "Leaving for Mina today for



Khan

Hajj. If I have hurt someone consciously or unconsciously, please forgive me, for God sake. I say it from the bottom of my heart to kindly forgive me. The Almighty Allah be kind to you."

Pakistan: Shoab Akhtar (Cricket)



Akhtar

tweeted, showing pictures of himself in Ihram clothing.

In another tweet, he posted a photo with the caption: "At the Grand Hajj Symposium 2022 representing Pakistan in the Holy land of Makkah Mukarramah."

The Pakistani cricket star also expressed gratitude to the Saudi Embassy in Islamabad for this honor.

In a series of tweets documenting his "beautiful journey from Makkah to Madinah," he shared videos from the two holy cities, including a unique view of the Holy Kaaba from the top of the Makkah Clock Tower, the Haramain High-Speed Railway Station in Makkah, the Quba Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

Akhtar, who retired from international cricket after the 2011 World Cup, became popular for his aggressive pace attack during his career. His fans called him the "Rawalpindi Express" since he bowled at 100 miles per hour at least twice during his heydays, making him the fastest bowler.

England: Adil Rashid (Cricket)

Adil Rashid missed England's white-ball series against India after being given clearance by cricket chiefs to make this year's Hajj.

Rashid said earlier this year that he had "reached the right time in his life" to make the pilgrimage to Makkah.

He was granted leave by the England and Wales Cricket Board and his club Yorkshire to perform Hajj.

"I've been wanting to do it for a little while, but I've found it pretty difficult with the timings," Rashid told ESPNcricinfo. "This year, I felt as though it was something that I had to do and something I wanted to do as well."

He added: "I spoke to the ECB and to Yorkshire about it, and they were very understanding and encouraging, like: 'Yes, you do what you've got to do and then come back when you can.' Me and the missus are going and I'll be there for a couple of weeks."

"It's a massive moment:



Rashid

Each faith has got their own different things, but for Islam and being a Muslim, this is one of the biggest ones. It's a big thing for my faith and for myself. I knew that I needed to do it while I'm young, strong, and healthy. This is something that I really committed to myself that I would do."

Congratulating Rashid and wishing him the best for his lifetime journey, England Cricket, the official Twitter account of the England cricket team, tweeted: "Hajj Mubarak, Rash. We all wish Adil well as he makes the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah."



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