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SACRED GROUND

SCORES HEAD FOR PROPHET'S MOSQUE

It's a time to internalise Prophet Muhammad's struggles and teachings

MADINAH

PROPHET Muhammad declared the city of Madinah as a sacred ground, supplicating Allah for blessings for its inhabitants.

For this reason, millions of Muslims make their way to Madinah Al-Munawarah when they perform the haj and umrah each year.

The sight of thousands of believers heading to the Prophet's Mosque over the past three days has been nothing short of mesmerising, and underscored the significance of Prophet Muhammad in his role in delivering and spreading the teachings of Islam.

When Muslims visit Madinah, it calls on them to internalise the struggles and the unwavering belief that Prophet Muhammad had put in to teach Islam to the people.



AZURA ABAS

Seniyati Mohd Dlah from Yong Peng, Johor, was one of the 30,200 Malaysian pilgrims who would be performing the fifth pillar of Islam this year.

The 52-year-old teacher reached the Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Madinah about 9am on Saturday with her husband Suhaimi Kardi, 50.

Barely a day in Madinah after travelling for about eight hours by flight, Seniyati has not allowed fatigue to stop her from conducting her prayers at the Prophet's Mosque.

"Being here in Madinah for the first time and inside this mosque make me feel close-

er to the Prophet.

"Thanks to Tabung Haji's Ziarah (Visiting) activities, I can see for myself the places where Prophet Muhammad himself had been before," said Seniyati while waiting for the prayer call.

Those who had performed the umrah before were seen to be more confident and would usually be the source of reference for the first-timers.

Nonetheless, Tabung Haji (TH) has taken into account various aspects of the Malaysian pilgrims' needs, ranging from healthcare facilities all the way to emotional support through counselling services.

In terms of addressing any queries or doubts on umrah and haj-related matters, TH has stationed religious consultants at the pilgrims' hotels and also provided facilities for pilgrims to bank in or withdraw money from their Tabung Haji account.

With these facilities, peace of mind is assured, allowing the pilgrims to focus on their worship.

TH has also taken the additional step of sating the pilgrims' curiosity of Madinah, via its "Ziarah" programme, which all Malaysian pilgrims will participate in.

Based on my observation, many aspects of the haj and umrah have been taken into account, with TH constantly seeking to make improvements.

One of the improvements made this year is providing a prepaid SIM card to each pilgrim following cooperation formed between TH and Saudi Arabian telecommunication Service Mobily.

The excitement of having the prepaid SIM card was palpable as almost instantly, the Mobily kiosks were swarmed by Malaysian pilgrims seeking to activate their respective phone lines.

The Mobily Sim card is a godsend not only for the pilgrims but also for the media team covering the 14:00H haj.

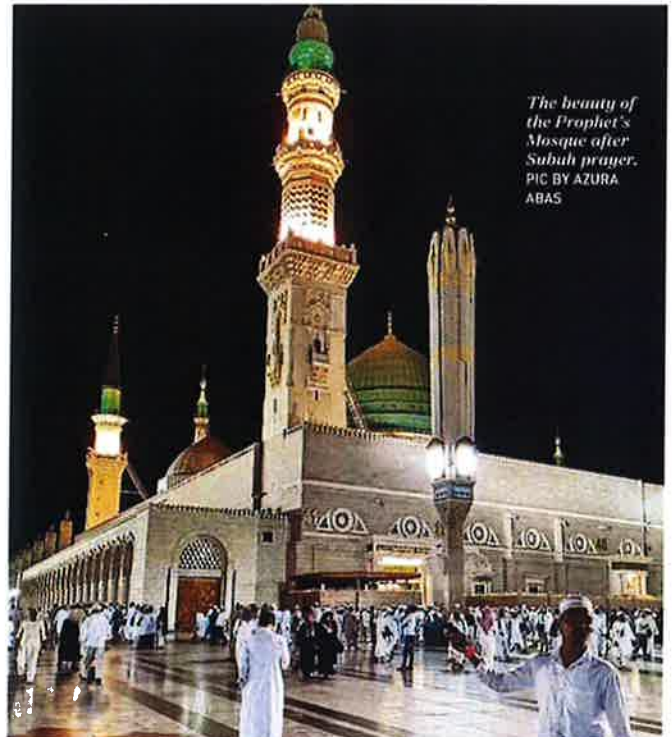
Another facility worth mentioning are the Pos Malaysia counters, a popular destination for Malaysian pilgrims to send home all the purchases they have made in Madinah.

It was learnt that more than two tonnes of consignments were received by Pos Malaysia within just two days from the first batches of pilgrims.

Madinah's beauty, steeped in history and coupled with its friendly locals, has made many Malaysian pilgrims' short stay here memorable.

A great sadness came over me as I ended my visit to Madinah by making a final stop near Prophet Muhammad's grave, bidding my farewell and praying to Allah to return again one day.

Alhamdulillah, my trip to Madinah has been another life-changing experience. Onward to Makkah.



The beauty of the Prophet's Mosque after Subuh prayer.
PIC BY AZURA ABAS