



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

19 December 2017

TABUNG HAJI SHOULD HANDLE UMRAH MATTERS

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is very disappointed with the Imams (Integrated Manasik Monitoring System) issue and how it has been handled.

The Umrah Regulatory Management Council claimed that Imams was put in place to stop the ever increasing number of Umrah scams that are happening every year.

Why was it necessary to create a system that was going to be run by a third party company and was going to cost pilgrims RM90.10 extra on top of what they would already be paying to go for Umrah?

Furthermore, now that Imams has been shelved, the Deputy Tourism and Culture Minister, Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin says that they will be creating a new mechanism to crack down on Umrah scams.

Again we ask why such a thing is necessary. The Umrah Special License given to travel agencies with Muassasah status (authorisation to manage pilgrims) is issued by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC). Why is the enforcement department of said ministry not going after these scammers?

An even better solution would be for Tabung Haji to issue both the license for Hajj and Umrah and leave MOTAC out of it.

Tabung Haji already has the necessary mechanism in place, all they need to do incorporate Umrah matters into that mechanism. For those who are unaware, Umrah is a minor pilgrimage.

As early as September 2016, CAP contacted Tabung Haji about the increasing rate of Umrah scams. The statistics we had at the time, from the Consumer Claims Tribunal Malaysia on Umrah scams, was that there had been 2761 victims from the years 2012 to 2015 with an estimated loss of RM19million.

In January of 2017, Tabung Haji wrote back to us to say that as per the Tabung Haji Act 1995 (Act 535), matters pertaining to Umrah do not come under their purview. In October 2017, Tabung Haji informed us that even though Hajj is a seasonal occurrence, the preparations for Hajj take place all year round; and it was apt for the Umrah Regulatory Management Council that was established 3 years ago under MOTAC to handle Umrah matter. This came after we had suggested that Tabung Haji take over Umrah matters as Umrah scams were still rampant under MOTAC.

We call for the Tabung Haji Act 1995 (Act 535) to be amended at once to include Umrah matters, just as we have called for from day one that we addressed the issue of Umrah scams. We also suggest that Tabung Haji employ more staff, that their employees learn better management skills and that they update their system if necessary. They must do anything and everything they need to make it so that Tabung Haji is the authoritative body handling Umrah matters.

We believe this is the best way to eliminate Umrah scams from happening.

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President

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)