

ENFORCEMENT AND INVESTOR PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

SEC ADVISORY

UNAUTHORIZED AND ILLEGAL OFFERING OF MUSLIM PILGRIMAGE (HAJJ) TRAVEL PACKAGES

The **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)** has recently received information that certain entities allegedly engaged in **fraudulent and unauthorized activities related to the offering of Muslim Pilgrimage (Hajj) packages**. These packages reportedly include airfare, accommodation, transportation, Hajj visas, and *khemah* (tent accommodations), despite the entity's lack of the required authority or accreditation to offer or facilitate such services.

These entities purportedly maintain physical offices and conduct operations online, through its websites and social media platforms, thereby inducing prospective pilgrims to part with their funds under the false impression that it is duly authorized to offer complete Muslim Pilgrimage (Hajj) packages.

The public is strongly reminded that under Republic Act No. 9997, otherwise known as the *National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009*, only the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), through its Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment, is empowered to administer all programs, projects, and activities related to the annual Hajj / pilgrimage to Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The NCMF is likewise responsible for formulating guidelines to ensure the timely processing of pilgrims' travel documents and the equitable and reasonable collection of authorized fees. Pilgrims shall also be accorded free choice of travel agencies and airlines or other means of transportation to and from the site of pilgrimage.

Travel agencies, however, are not authorized to organize, administer, facilitate, or offer Hajj packages or related pilgrimage arrangements. Their permissible participation is strictly limited to the lawful sale of airline tickets for travel between the Philippines and Saudi Arabia.

The public is further advised that proposals to privatize the administration and processing of the Muslim Pilgrimage (Hajj) are still pending legislative action in Congress. Until such measure is duly enacted into law, private agencies or entities remain without authority to process, manage, or administer Hajj packages.

The public is strongly encouraged to report and file complaints regarding the unauthorized offering of Muslim Pilgrimage (Hajj) packages by private entities with law enforcement authorities such as the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) or the Philippine National Police for possible criminal action.

FOR THE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE OF THE PUBLIC.

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The SEC Headquarters, 7907 Makati Avenue
Salcedo Village, Bel-air, Makati City
☎ (+63 2) 5322 7696
www.sec.gov.ph | imessagemo@sec.gov.ph