



**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila**

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

HOUSE BILL NO. 1378



**Introduced by Representative
ZIAUR-RAHMAN "ZIA" ALONTO ADIONG**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is one of the five pillars of Islam and a deeply spiritual obligation for able-bodied Muslims. For Filipino Muslims, it is not only a religious duty but a sacred journey that represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many. However, for years, the management of the Hajj by the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) has been marred by inefficiencies, complaints of mismanagement, lack of transparency, and limited choices for pilgrims. These systemic issues have consistently undermined the quality, affordability, and accessibility of the Hajj experience for Muslim Filipinos.

This bill seeks to address these longstanding concerns by reforming the current government-led system and transitioning the administration of the Hajj pilgrimage to the private sector, while retaining for the NCMF its role in representing the country in official capacities and coordinating with relevant agencies. This move is in line with global best practices where the private sector plays a key role in travel facilitation, while government provides oversight and regulatory guidance.

Under the proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 9997, otherwise known as the "National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009," the Commission will no longer engage in the procurement of services and flights, nor will it process documents or collect fees on behalf of pilgrims. These functions will be privatized, allowing Muslim Filipino pilgrims the freedom to choose their own travel agencies, service providers, and airlines, promoting competition, improving services, and potentially lowering costs.

The Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment will be limited to coordination, facilitation, and monitoring of pilgrims' compliance, ensuring that standards are met and complaints are addressed. The bill also institutionalizes the accreditation and regulation of Sheiks or Hajj Operators, who will act as guides and liaisons between pilgrims and service providers. These operators must be knowledgeable in Hajj rituals and fluent in Arabic to ensure a meaningful experience for Filipino pilgrims.

Finally, the bill mandates the submission of a transition plan within six months from the effectivity of the Act. This ensures accountability and a structured handover of responsibilities from government to the private sector.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG
1st District, Lanao del Sur



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**AN ACT
PROVIDING BETTER SERVICES TO MUSLIM FILIPINO PILGRIMS
THROUGH PRIVATIZATION OF THE ANNUAL HAJJ PILGRIMAGE,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9997,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM
FILIPINOS ACT OF 2009"**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Section 8 of Republic Act No. 9997, otherwise known as the "National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009," is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 8. Powers and Functions. – To accomplish its mandate, the Commission shall have the following powers and functions:

(q) REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINE DELEGATION FOR THE ANNUAL HAJJ, SIGN GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT AGREEMENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL HAJJ, and coordinate with pertinent offices to ensure the success of the annual Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, BUT IS PROHIBITED FROM PROCURING SERVICES AND FLIGHTS AND PROCESSING DOCUMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE PHILIPPINE HAJJ DELEGATION."

SEC. 2. Section 11 of the same Act is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 11. Bureaus. – The Bureaus of the Commission shall consist of the Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs, Bureau of Muslim Cultural Affairs, Bureau of Muslim Settlement, Bureau of External Relations, Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment, Bureau of Peace and Conflict Resolution, and the Bureau of Legal Affairs. Each of these Bureaus shall be headed by a Director who shall hold the same rank, salary, and privileges of a Staff Bureau Director. The Bureau Director shall be appointed by the President from

among the names or nominees submitted by the Commission to the President.

(e) Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment. – This Bureau shall be primarily responsible for ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia FOR THE BENEFIT OF MUSLIM FILIPINOS BY COORDINATING WITH THE PERTINENT OFFICES.”

The Bureau shall MONITOR the timely BOOKING OF TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS, SUCH AS FLIGHTS AND HOTELS, AND processing of the pilgrim's travel documents, SUCH AS PASSPORTS AND VISAS. HOWEVER, THE BUREAU SHALL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ANNUAL HAJJ, INCLUDING THE COLLECTION OF FEES, BOOKING OF HOTELS, PROCUREMENT OF FOODS, MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES, ARRANGEMENT OF FLIGHTS TO AND FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, OR PROCESSING OF VISAS.

The pilgrims shall be accorded free choice of travel agencies, SERVICE PROVIDERS, and airlines FOR THE PURPOSE of AN ANNUAL Hajj (PILGRIMAGE) IN the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The preparation FOR THE ANNUAL HAJJ SHALL BE ADMINISTERED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE BUREAU IS LIMITED TO COORDINATION, FACILITATION, AND MONITORING OF PILGRIMS' COMPLIANCE.

The Bureau shall KEEP A REGISTRY OF SHEIKS/HAJJ OPERATORS WHO ARE PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES ENGAGED IN FACILITATING, PROCESSING, AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE TO MUSLIM FILIPINOS FOR THE ANNUAL HAJJ. SHEIKS MUST SPEAK ARABIC FLUENTLY AND HAVE AMPLE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HAJJ TO HELP MUSLIM FILIPINOS EXPERIENCE A MEMORABLE AND SUCCESSFUL HAJJ.

The primary function of the SHEIKS/HAJJ OPERATORS IS TO ENSURE PROPER COORDINATION BETWEEN THE COMMISSION AND PILGRIMS FOR THE TIMELY DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS OF THE PILGRIMS DURING THE ANNUAL HAJJ ACTIVITIES. THEY MAY LOSE THEIR ACCREDITATION IF THEY ARE FOUND GUILTY OF NEGLECTING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER DUE PROCESS AND HEARING.”

SEC. 3. Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) shall submit a transition plan with timetable to the Committee on Muslim Affairs of the House of Representatives and Committee on Cultural Communities and Muslim Affairs of the Senate of the Philippines reflecting the transfer of the administration of the conduct of the annual Hajj from the NCMF, through the Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment, to the private sector.

The Secretary, Commissioners, and other responsible officers of the NCMF may be held administratively liable under existing civil service laws for failure to submit the transition plan. Such failure is also a cause for removal from office and the President of the Philippines may exercise the power granted to the President under Section 7 of Republic Act No. 9997.

SEC. 4. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,