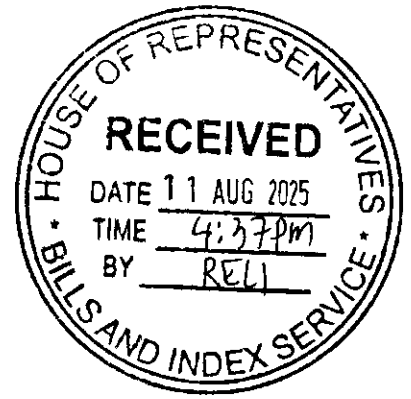




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

20th CONGRESS
1st Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **3483**



Introduced by Representative SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA

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"

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to privatize the provision of services to Muslim Filipinos attending the annual *Hajj* Pilgrimage due to recurring problems encountered by pilgrims, problems that have become an annual cycle, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos failed to solve.

In the 19th Congress, this representation submitted House Bill No. 9413 and together with two (2) other bills numbered House Bill No. 6672 and 9096 filed by Representatives Sittie Aminah Q. Dimaporo and Mujiv S. Hataman respectively, were harmonized to constitute House Bill No. 10867 which the House of Representatives approved on 3rd and Final Reading on November 12, 2024.

The importance of this measure cannot be downplayed because the conduct of *Hajj* or pilgrimage is a mandatory religious duty for every adult Muslim to perform at least once in their lifetime; and while *Hajj* is first and foremost a spiritual duty, it is also physically demanding thus any issue that causes complications on accommodations, transportation, food, safety and well-being of the pilgrims is of utmost concern.

In recent years, calls to relieve government of involvement in the annual *Hajj* pilgrimage has been persistent because of the many issues surrounding the preparations and actual pilgrimage under the direction and supervision of the NCMF.

The participation of the private sector in the preparations for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca is envisioned to ease the burden of our Muslim brothers and sisters as they make their way to the holy city of Mecca to fulfill at least once in their lifetime, one of the fundamental Muslim practices and institutions.

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

SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA

Representative

Maguindanao del Norte, Lone District



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Be it enacted by the Senate and the 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:

"(a) x x x

"x x x

(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.**

"x x x

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.

“(a) x x x

“(b) x x x

“(c) x x x

“(d) x x x

“(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 pilgrims travel document, **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** IN the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. **THE pilgrims ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF FEES, SET BY** 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 PILGRIM’S COMPLIANCE.**

“The Bureau shall accredit qualified, and deserving sheiks/**HAJJ OPERATORS TO LEAD THE PILGRIMS IN THE ANNUAL HAJJ.** It 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. THE SHEIKS / HAJJ OPERATORS SHALL ALSO LEAD, GUIDE AND PROVIDE RELATED HAJJ SERVICES TO THEIR RESPECTIVE PILGRIMS. THEY MAY LOSE THEIR ACCREDITATION IF THEY ARE FOUND GUILTY OF NEGLECTING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER DUE PROCESS AND HEARING.**

The Bureau shall likewise be responsible for the administration of *awqaf* properties and institutions, and the conduct of research and studies for the establishment and maintenance of *Hajj* towns, Islamic centers and *awqaf* projects.

“(f) x x x

“(g) x x x

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,