



National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON)

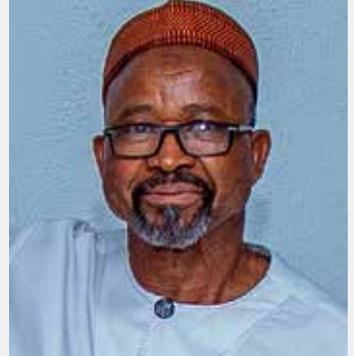
Newsletter

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Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/CEO of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) addressing members of press during the NAHCON quarterly Press briefing.



Late Ustaz Yusuf Nwoha

NAHCON losses board member Yusuf Nwoha

The NSCIA's representative at the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) is dead. In a condolence letter signed by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan described the deceased as an image of a focused, someone dedicated and ever willing to break new grounds for the development of his set goal....

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2021 HAJJ: NAHCON TO BEGIN REGISTRATION OF INTENDING PILGRIMS SEPTEMBER 9

The Chairman/CEO of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan, has announced September 9, as commencement date for the registration of intending pilgrims ahead of 2021 Hajj.

Mr Hassan, who disclosed this on while briefing journalists in Abuja, said the commission would open e-Hajj portal for ease of the registration.

He advised intending pilgrims to secure their deposits with the Commission until 2021.

“We advise intending pilgrims who have made deposits but do not have a bank account and wish for a refund to hasten in opening one.

“If they are not ready or willing to hold a bank account, NAHCON advises them to secure their deposits with the Commission until 2021 to enable them to move their deposits safely,” he said.

The chairman assured intending pilgrims that the much-awaited Hajj savings scheme would be in place soon.

He said the contributory Hajj savings scheme is an idea whose time has come.

“I believe with this scheme in place, we will be able to make the cost of Hajj affordable for intending pilgrims in the future.”

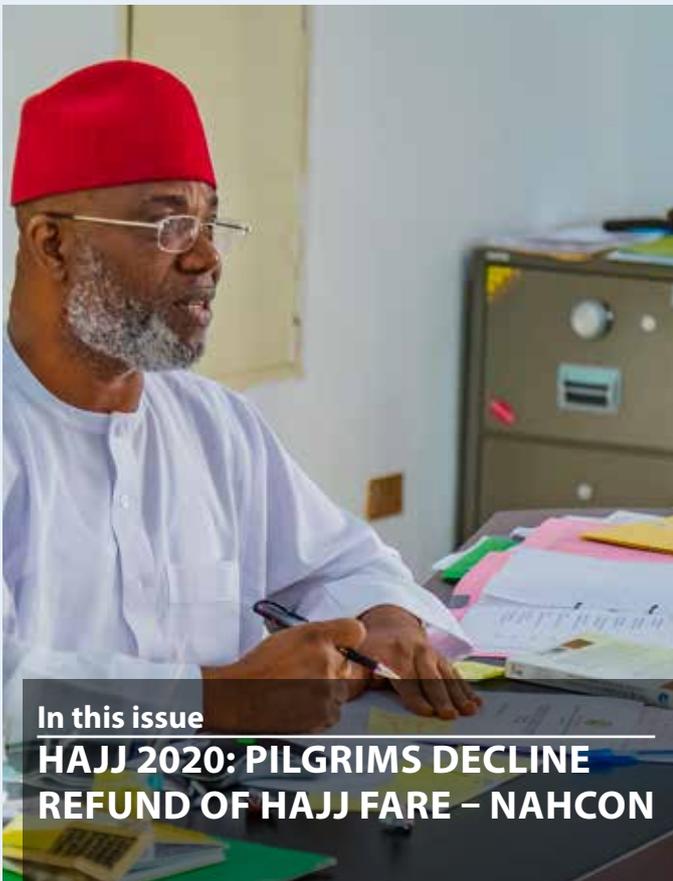
He, however, urged intending pilgrims who wished to recover their Hajj deposits with the state pilgrims welfare boards or private tour operators to indicate interest, saying such funds would be refunded.

He said the commission had started the process of refund to various state pilgrim's boards.

He, however said, “Those who may wish to leave or roll over their deposit for the 2021 hajj shall be given priority and the rights of first refusal in 2021 hajj”.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have cancelled the 2020 International Pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah over coronavirus fears.

The commission has also commenced the process of refund of Hajj deposits to intending pilgrims and has started to re-strategies ahead of 2021 hajj operations.



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QUICK INFO

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NAHCON SURVEY

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) in partnership with National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has embarked on a transformation journey that will be driven by Digital Technologies. The Commission therefore decided to conduct a survey by gathering inputs from all Hajj Industry Stakeholders. The identified stakeholders are hereby requested to participate in the online survey by clicking on the link below and answer the questions accordingly as it applies to your category.

Thank you for your participation and kindly note that your partaking in this exercise will give the exercise broader base for success.

<http://survey.nigeriahajj.com.gov.ng>



CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

As decreed by the Creator of the universe, “Every soul shall taste of death...” With this reality and total submission to the will of the Most High, I the Chairman, board members, management and entire staff of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) received the shocking news of the fatal accident that claimed the life of one of our own, Mallam Yusuf Chinedu Nwoha.

Until his sudden death, Mallam Nwoha was a NAHCON board member representing Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). Within the short life of this board, the deceased had made meaningful suggestions on improving Hajj participation from Nigeria’s South East region, his birthplace. Mallam Nwoha’s short spell in the Commission conjures up an image of a focused and dedicated operative ever willing to break new grounds for the development of his set goal. His demise has left a void far more profound than can be imagined.

May I also use this solemn period to remind us all how transient life is, with the hope that we may utilize the time we have in impacting positively on advancement of mankind.

May the Infinite Lord have mercy on Mallam Yusuf Nwoha’s kind soul and console his family on this irreparable loss.

Signed:
 Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan,
 Chairman/CEO,
 NAHCON

HAJJ 2020: PILGRIMS DECLINE REFUND OF HAJJ FARE – NAHCON



The Chairman, National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan says more than 90 per cent of the 2020 in-tending pilgrims, have declined the refund of their hajj fare. Kunle Hassan announced this when he paid a working visit to Ilorin. He stated that Nigerian intending pilgrims from the 36 states and Abuja could not perform the pilgrimage in compliance with the Saudi Arabia directive due to the ravaging coronavirus disease. The commission Chairman said that only 10 per cent of those, who paid for the cancelled pilgrimage, have collected their money back. “Over 90 per cent of Nigerians who paid Hajj fare still have their money with us and we are not sure how much they will add to perform the 2021 Hajj,” he said. All monies collected

from the intending pilgrims are kept with the Central Bank of Nigeria. The Chairman said that the Commission was working with the states Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board to reduce the number of days Nigerian pilgrims spend at the Holy land to make the journey less cumbersome. He, however, warned intending pilgrims against performing the pilgrimage with unauthorised tour operators in the country. Alhaji Mohammed Tunde-Jimoh, the Executive Secretary of the Kwara Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, received the team. Tunde-Jimoh lauded the Commission for the visit, saying it re-echoed the relationship that exists between the Commission and the board. Dr Sambo Sambaki, had earlier led the visitors to inspect facilities at the Ilorin Hajj Transit camp.

NAHCON PLANS TO ESTABLISH HAJJ TRAINING INSTITUTE

submits application to NBTE

Determined to establish the National Hajj Training Institute in Nigeria, the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), has submitted an application to that effect to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). Chairman of the Commission, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan while presenting the application letter to the Executive Secretary of NBTE, Dr Mas’udu Adamu Kazaure at the board’s headquarters in Kaduna, NAHCON Chairman said, establishment of the Institute has become imperative to formalise training activities of the Commission. The NAHCON Chief Executive said, the Hajj industry is a multi billion dollar industry, and any industry that big requires people with all-round and formal knowledge of what the

industry is all about. “We want to train people, collate and analyse data, train teachers, produce manual and set a minimum standard for those willing to participate in Hajj. We want to contribute to the growth of Nigeria economy.

He explained that the commission will like to publish books, manuals and videotapes in order to enhance hajj service delivery. In his remarks, the NBTE Executive Secretary, Mas’udu Kazaure commended NAHCON for taking such desirable step and enumerated the criteria and other fundamentals required to set up a result-oriented Hajj Institute. Kazaure assured that NBTE will send an advisory team to the Commission by next week to enable it perfect the requirements for the Institute.



NBTE Executive Secretary Mas’udu Kazaure responding to Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON during their meeting on Hajj Training Institute

NAHCON CHARGES CONTRACTORS TO SPEED UP PROJECTS

The Chairman of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, NAHCON, met with contractors handling various Hajj Development Levy Projects to assess level of work accomplished from time of award of contract to date.

In attendance at the meeting were project supervisors and other relevant officials from the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. Also in attendance were the three permanent Commissioners and senior management staff of the Commission.

The meeting was at the behest of the NAHCON Chairman and management in order to speed up work on the sites and to determine whether there are any circumstances hindering completion of the projects. The

meeting was seen as necessary if Nigerian pilgrims are to start enjoying the utilities as soon as possible. The meeting therefore paved way to hasten work at the sites with deadlines issued for completion.

It would be recalled that NAHCON is constructing various amenities across the country for use by pilgrims and for revenue generation during non-Hajj operational periods. The constructions include hotel-like structures for camping of intending pilgrims before airlift, construction of clinics, event centres, mosques, and perimeter fencing among others.

Works at the several sites in all the geopolitical zones are at advanced levels while some have been completed.



Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON

EID-AL-ADHA MESSAGE FROM NAHCON CHAIRMAN

Eid-al Adha is a celebration of sacrifice. Circumstances surrounding this year's eid-al-adha are those that demand an additional kind of sacrifice from intending pilgrims worldwide. It is a sacrifice by millions of faithfuls who would have desired to assemble on the plains of Arafat in answer to the call of their Lord. But for a virus too minute to be seen by the naked eyes, these approximately 2.5 million Muslims could not perform Hajj this year.

We give gratitude to Allah despite the obstacle and pray Allah to accept our sacrifices. We ask Him to accept ibadat of the selected Hujjaj, blessed by the Almighty Himself to worship Him on the plains of Arafat this 2020. May He grant them Hajj mabrur and clear the path for the rest of His worshippers to humble themselves before Him in the next 2021 Hajj season.

As we celebrate this eid, may Allah The Most Benevolent turn our prayers, devotions, sacrifices, charities and remembrance of Him into atonement for our inadequacies. May He expiate our sins and eradicate the bedevilling corona virus that has prevented mankind from enjoying the free luxuries of life that we have taken for granted.

Let me here, on behalf of board members and staff of NAHCON, pledge our commitment to Nigerian intending pilgrims. We promise to deploy all arsenals towards organizing a successful 2021 Hajj for Nigerian intending pilgrims and other stakeholders. We remain hopeful that the Almighty will permit Hajj to take place without threat to human health.

From the stables of NAHCON, we wish Muslims all over the world eid mubarak. May we all live long to celebrate many more eids.

Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan,
Chairman/CEO,
NAHCON

ADAMAWA PILGRIMS' BOARD RETURNS N53M TO 46 INTENDING PILGRIMS

The Adamawa Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Commission has refunded N53,035,000 deposits to 46 intending pilgrims that requested for it.

The commission did so since the 2020 holy Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia had been aborted due to the outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had restricted international pilgrims from performing the year 2020 Hajj due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Salihu Abubakar, the Permanent Secretary and the Executive Secretary of the Adamawa Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Commission refunded the money deposited for the pilgrimage to intending pilgrims on Thursday in Yola.

The executive secretary said that a total of N53,035,000 was refunded by the commission to those who applied for a refund of the 2020 Hajj deposit.

Abubakar said that a total of 1,169 intending pilgrims from the state paid for the 2020 holy pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

"A total of 1,169 Intending Pilgrims from Adamawa paid for the aborted 2020 Hajj Pilgrimage due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

"Six hundred and ninety-four (694) out of the number paid the full fare of N1,459,000 while the remaining 475 intending pilgrims didn't pay the full amount.

"And 46 of the intending pilgrims applied for the refund of their monies," Abubakar said.

He said that the refund of the deposit was a matter of choice, as those that did not apply for the refund would automatically be registered for the 2021 Hajj operation.

"

NAHCON CHAIRMAN VISITS KADUNA STATE ACTING OVERSEER



Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON during his courtesy call to acting overseer of Kaduna State Pilgrims welfare Board Hajiya Hannatu Zailani

Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, sought support for the success of the proposed Hajj Training Institute (HTI) and the Hajj Savings Scheme (HSS). He made the call when he visited the Kaduna State Pilgrims' Welfare Board yesterday, 19th August 2020 at the board's Katsina Road office, Kaduna. Alhaji Zikrullah described the visit as an expression of gratitude to Kaduna state board for hosting the NAHCON contingent despite the short notice. In addition, the visit was purposively part of the Commission's mobilization drive towards creating awareness on the two initiatives. He recognized state boards as crucial to the success of both initiatives. The NAHCON Chairman opined that the state boards will benefit immensely from the two schemes being directly in contact with the pilgrims and staff for whom training and retraining on Hajj administration and participation is essential. As for the HSS, he was confident of it being a game

changer in the Hajj industry and one we must collectively promote. The Chairman further spoke on the HTI whose aim is to professionalize and standardize Hajj operation in Nigeria, open up employment opportunities and contribute to the growth of Nigerian economy.

Reacting to the NAHCON Chairman's remarks, Acting Overseer of the state's pilgrims' welfare board, Hajiya Hannatu Zailani, pledged readiness to support NAHCON whenever the need arises because of the Commission's laudable initiatives. She described the two schemes as eliciting enthusiasm and they are eagerly awaiting their commencements. She further informed the gathering that out of the 2,383 pilgrims that registered for 2020 Hajj in the state, only 172 had requested for a refund. She revealed that the refund will commence as soon as government approval is received. Finally, Hajiya Zailani thanked the NAHCON leadership for the visit and prayed for their safe return.

He recognized state boards as crucial to the success of both initiatives.

HAJJ 2020: KATSINA TO COMMENCE PAYMENT OF REFUND

Katsina State Governor, Aminu Bello Masari has approved the refunds of 2020 Hajj deposits paid by intending pilgrims from the state.

Executive director of the board Alhaji Suleiman Nuhu kuki stated this during a press briefing in his office today.

He said the Governor also approved that those wishing to leave their deposits as a roll-over against 2021 are free to do so, under a signed agreement between intending pilgrims and the Board which will be given priority of registra-

tion during the 2021 Hajj exercise.

The Executive Director further said the payment of the refunds of deposits to those who requested is to commence as soon as possible, adding that for those interested in rolling over their deposits should approach their respective zonal pilgrims' officers to fill the agreement form.

Alhaji Suleiman Nuhu Kuki informed the members of the press that as at the closure of the 2020 Hajj deposits the board have a total of 1,539 intending pilgrims who registered and paid their depos-

its ranging from 300,000 to 1,500,000 against the 2020 Hajj operation.

"Like the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, the katsina state pilgrims welfare board as Muslims have accepted the Hajj 2020 cancellation by Saudi Authorities in good faith and absolute submission to the will of Allah".

He thanked the state government for the tremendous support and the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria for their guidance and the intending pilgrims for their understanding and cooperation in trying period.

NAHCON RESTATES COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING STANDARD OF HAJJ OPERATIONS



Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON (left) Malam Muhammad Danmalam Director FCT Muslims Pilgrims Welfare Board (centre) Abdullahi Magaji Hardawa (right) during NAHCON's Management visit to the FCT Pilgrims Welfare Board.

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), restated its determination to improving Hajj operations in line with global best practices. Chairman/ CEO of NAHCON, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan, gave the assurance when he paid an unscheduled visit to the FCT Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board office, in Abuja. Hassan said the Commission was taking necessary measures and would leave no stone unturned in improving Hajj management for the benefit of Nigerian Muslim pilgrims. He also pledged that the commission would involve all relevant stakeholders to provide first-hand services to intending pilgrims. According to the NAHCON chairman, the commission would continue to support all states' pilgrims' welfare Boards, agencies and commissions, to ensure that they provided excellent services to the pilgrims. Receiving the delegation, the Director of the FCT Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Malam Muhammad Dan-

mallam, expressed delight over the visit.

He said the visit was an encouragement to the board in its efforts at improving services to the guests of Allah. Danmallam reassured the delegation of the FCT Administration's resolve to ensure that the board recorded the best Hajj operations. According to him, the Administration, through the Minister of State for FCT, Dr Ramatu Aliyu, is Committed to supporting the board in the provision of seamless operations in the forthcoming Hajj. "It is that commitment that inspired the FCT minister of state to mobilise the contractor handling the construction of the board's permanent office complex to return to site, after being abandoned for many months due to lack of funding," he said. The director therefore, called on NAHCON to continue to support the board in its efforts at giving pilgrims the best service.



Group Photograph of NAHCON Management team and the FCT Pilgrims Welfare Board management



SPEECH BY THE CHAIRMAN/ CEO OF NATIONAL HAJJ COM- MISSION OF NIGERIA (NAH- CON) AT THE PRESS CONFER- ENCE HELD AT HAJJ HOUSE ON THURSDAY 23RD JULY 2020.

PROTOCOL.

It's my great pleasure to welcome members of the Fourth estate of the realm to this important event.

As you are all aware of the Saudi Arabia Government's position on the 2020 Hajj in which only few residents of the kingdom would perform the pilgrimage instead of the 2.5 million citizens across the globe that did same on a yearly basis.

I have expressed in many fora that the decision has been much painful to us as both Muslims and Hajj Administrators. Nevertheless, I want to pay glowing tribute to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the decision which in my considered opinion is a wise one in the current circumstance.

Though we know many Muslims are disappointed that we won't be able to take part in one of the most important five pillars of Islam (Hajj) enjoined by the Almighty Allah to be performed by abled Muslims - physically and financially at least once in a life time, yet we give gratitude to Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) in every circumstance we find ourselves whether positive or negative.

I therefore, sympathize with the people and Government of Saudi Arabia who have over the years play the role of a good host to millions of Muslims around the world during the great month of Zhul Hijjah. We are fully behind them at this auspicious time.

In the same vein, I wish to use this medium to pay tributes to all our intending pilgrims, many of who have been looking forward and praying anxiously for the day when they will face the Ka'aba. Now, that hope has been dashed. However, they should take consolation in the belief as a Muslim that nothing ever happens except with the permission of Almighty Allah. Our prayers therefore, is May Allah spare our lives and gives us the good health to be a participant at the 2021 Hajj. (Amin)

Gentlemen of the press, in spite of this setback, I have great news and some glad tidings to share with you, the intending pilgrims and Nigerians as a whole

1. Any intending pilgrims who desires to recover his/her deposit from the State Pilgrims Welfare Boards or the Private Tour Operators shall be refunded his money. However, those who may wish to leave or roll over their deposit for the 2021 Hajj shall be accorded the highest priority and "Rights of first refusal in 2021 Hajj. The Commission has started the process of refund to the various State Pilgrims Welfare Boards for onwards disbursement to the pilgrims. We believe that the various boards would by now have informed the public on the modalities for the refund of their deposit. On this note, I want to commend some of the SPWBs who have commenced the payment of refunds to their Pilgrims.

Likewise, those who decide to keep their 2020 deposit with the relevant agencies will have to sign a written agreement indicating their willingness to roll over their deposit against 2021 Hajj.

The roll over fund will be deposited in the Hajj Savings Scheme which will soon take off.

I want to announce that the Commission will commence Hajj registration for 2021 from the 9th of September. In the light of this, the e-Hajj portal for pilgrims' registration for 2021 Hajj will be opened immediately for registration to commence. Further guidelines will be issued in due course.

2. The operation of the much - awaited Hajj Savings Scheme will commence very soon. The contributory savings scheme is an idea whose time has come. I believe with the scheme in place, we will be able to make the cost of in the near future more affordable as well as boost the economy of the Muslim ummah in terms of employment generation, revenue profile of the Commission and aid the long-term preparation/plan for Hajj.

3. Similarly, NAHCON advises intending pilgrims who have made deposits but do not have a bank account and wish for a refund to hasten in opening one. If they are not ready or willing to hold a bank account, NAHCON strongly advises them to secure their deposit with the commission until 2021 or until they can move it safely.

4. Intending pilgrims who made deposits to private Tour Operators and want a refund are also advised to approach their respective travel agency with the duly signed service agreement. Where a disagreement arises, it should be promptly referred to the Commission for intervention.

5. Considering that Hajj and Umrah did not take place, NAHCON management has decided to refund Licensed Tour Operators their License Fees and Caution deposits.

6. The Commission has begun a transformation journey to the digital world- a Strategic Transformation Plan (2020-2024)- in which our idea will be driven by Technological innovation. A survey has been sent to stake holders to make their inputs. That will serve as Tool to engineer a brighter future for NAHCON.

CONCLUSION:

Gentlemen of the press, we want to solicit for everyone's support at this critical time for the world Muslims. This is a time for us all to build a unifying universal bond in supplication to the Almighty Allah to cleanse the earth from the scotch of the pandemic and return the world to normalcy so that Muslims can perform their Holy pilgrimage unhindered as before.

HAPPY EID-AL-KABEER IN ADVANCE!!!

MA'ASSALAM



Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq of Kwara State in a group photograph with NAHCON management team during their Courtesy visit to the Governor

GOVERNOR ABDULRAHMAN ABDULRAZAQ EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR NAHCON HAJJ SAVING SCHEME

Kwara State Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq has promised to support the Hajj Saving Scheme being piloted by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) to ensure smooth Hajj exercise in Nigeria

Gov. AbdulRazaq made the promise in Ilorin when he received the delegation of the commission led by its National Chairman/CEO, Zikrullah Hassan at the Government House.

The Governor informed NAHCON that the administration had fixed the state Hajj camp as part of COVID-19 campaign to support Sobi Specialist Hospital, saying the camp was in a sad and neglected situation before the government's intervention.

"We quickly had to fix the Hajj camp as part of our COVID-19 centre. We have Sobi Specialist Hospital as the primary centre with 350 beds. But suddenly realised that we are not even filling it up, we are not using half of the capacity. So, we have not really had the need to use the Hajj camp.

"But when I visited the camp, it was in a sad situation because of neglect. Basic things like water and sanitation were not there. It was as if it was a cattle station. So, we have to fix it," the governor explained.

Gov. AbdulRazaq said the proposed Hajj savings scheme would makes it possible for many Nigerians to participate in the Hajj exercise and allow national and sub-national governments to direct attention to other areas.

The governor noted that the state would look at the possibility of making use of the Hajj camp off season to keep the fa-

cility busy all year round in line with the programmes of the pilgrims' board.

In his remarks, the National Chairman/CEO of NAHCON, Al-haji Zikrullah Kunle appreciated the governor for renovating the Hajj camp and his assistance to the pilgrims from Kwara State through the Kwara State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board during the last Hajj exercise.

Alhaji Hassan added that the commission would find the necessary financial engineering strategy through the proposed Hajj Savings Scheme to make Hajj more affordable to Muslims. "One of the aims of the new board is to make Hajj affordable and we don't think this is going to be easy. But certainly we believe that with your guidance and many others like you, with Allah's support, we're determined to make Hajj affordable. This is because we know that Hajj is something that is much more loved by the poor.

"Yet Hajj cost is determined by the value of foreign exchange because the foreign exchange content of Hajj is higher than the local content. The flight is determined in dollars. The accommodation is determined in dollars and sundry of other costs.

"We know we must find the necessary financial engineering strategy to make it possible so that the cost of Hajj can remain affordable to the very poor who desire Hajj much more than the middle class or the rich people," he added.

NAHCON INTENSIFIES PREPARATIONS FOR KICK-OFF OF HAJJ SAVINGS SCHEME

Pursuant to the Commission's desire to establish a Hajj Savings Scheme (HSS), the Coordinator of HSS/HTI (Hajj Training Institute), Dr Aliyu Tanko, led a team of NAHCON officials to the headquarters of Jaiz Bank in Abuja on 12th August where they met with the Management Team of the bank led by the MD/CEO Mr. Hassan Usman and other top functionaries of the Bank.

The purpose of the meeting was to show the NAHCON Team

(which includes the ICT Team) the demo of the portal developed for the rollout of the savings scheme. The meeting was interactive. What the Bank presented captured most of the requirements of the Commission. The NAHCON team raised some observations which the bank's ICT unit promised to amend.

The meeting ended with a prayer by Ishaq Ibrahim Jae of NAHCON

GOVERNOR MOHAMMED COMMENDS NAHCON FOR ITS PLAN TO IMPLEMENT SAVING SCHEME FOR PILGRIMAGE

His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, Kauran Bauchi today received in audience, officials of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria led by its Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan. The Governor who received the officials at the Council Chamber, Government House Bauchi, noted with satisfaction, the various reforms introduced by the commission for the welfare of pilgrims. He said their visit will encourage his administration to do more for the welfare of the state pilgrims thereby ensuring improvement in the hajj affairs.

Governor Bala Mohammed informed the officials that the ongoing construction of new modern hajj camp in the state is part of the determination of his administration to cushion the challenges faced by intending pilgrims in the process. He therefore directed the Secretary to the State Government to provide office accommodation to the Commission for effective conduct of some of its activities in the state.

“Mr Chairman, what you intend to do of looking at the best global practice in making sure that we do not only do Hajj without sorrow, but make an investment where we teach our people saving culture and thier saving can apply on the Hajj process where they get some cushion, solace and subsidy and in doing this, show to the world that this largest pilgrimage country is really coming in terms with it’s challenges, problems and making sure that at least we free resources from the system”

The Chairman of the Commission, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan said the commission will use its land provided by Governor Bala Mohammed when he was the FCT Minister to establish International Hajj Training Institute. He identified Bauchi as one of the key stakeholder in the hajj Affairs in the country, appealed to the Governor not to relent in supporting the Commission for better performance.



Bauchi State Governor Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, Kauran Bauchi while addressing the NAHCON delegation when they paid him a working visit in Bauchi state Government house



Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON and Management members during a Project inspection in Bauchi.



Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman/ CEO NAHCON (R) Sheikh Suleiman Momoh Commissioner PRSILS (C) and Abdullahi Magaji Hardawa Commissioner Operations(L) during an inspection in Bauchi.

RE: N150B HAJJ FEES ‘TRAPPED’ OVER CANCELLED PILGRIMAGE



The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) would like to draw the attention of the editor and publishers of the Guardian newspaper to a report with the above headline published in its 24th July 2020 edition where unfounded claims were made. The report avers that N150 billion Naira belonging to Nigerian pilgrims is hanging in the balance following cancellation of international pilgrimage.

According to the report, this amount represents payment made to service providers by “Nigerians” for this year’s pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. The alleged trapped amount is said to be the “total paid to airlines, hoteliers, transporters, hajj operators and states’ pilgrims’ boards among others”.

How the writer arrived at this total amount and who made the payments remains a puzzle considering the following facts.

First, cancellation of Hajj itself was only finalized on 22nd of June, 2020 but prior to that date, Saudi Arabia had already suspended Umrah visit since 27th of February 2020 and directed Hajj arrangement to be put on hold until further notice on 31st of March 2020. The latter directive especially warned against making any financial commitments or confirming bookings in the Kingdom until instructed to do so. Therefore, at which stage the alleged payments were made to service providers remains a question requiring answer from the writer.

Secondly, it is pertinent to note that since the directive by Saudi Arabia for suspension of Hajj arrangements, NAHCON had not issued any Hajj licence neither to State Pilgrims’ Welfare Boards nor to Private Tour Operators pending outcome of Saudi Arabia’s decision. Nonetheless, the Commission had received applications and carried out an in-house screening of eligible candidates for licensing, awaiting time when a go ahead notification will be issued by the Saudi authorities. Yet, license for Hajj was never issued for 2020 pilgrimage.

It would be recalled that the NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan had informed the general public in several interviews that no financial commitment was made to service providers in Saudi Arabia or in Nigeria for 2020 Hajj. It is also a fact that it was while the 4th board was carrying out accommodation and catering negotiations in Saudi Arabia that the doubts on Hajj and Umrah first emerged in the Kingdom,

therefore Hajj arrangements had never gone beyond negotiations.

True, NAHCON had approved collection of Hajj fares by State Pilgrims’ Welfare Boards and Private Tour Operators in readiness for any eventualities; with the caveat that if Hajj does not hold, depositors will be refunded their monies if they so wish. Hajj fare collection however does not translate to payments being made to service providers anywhere in the world. As a matter of fact, some state pilgrims’ boards and private tour agencies had already commenced refund of Hajj fares to pilgrims who desire for such.

As for Licensed Tour Operators, their Umrah license fees and caution deposits were actually returned to them by the Commission. Besides, bearing in mind that Hajj license had not been issued to the Tour Operators, coupled with the fact that the hosts themselves had instructed the world Hajj operators to halt any financial commitment on Hajj preparations, it is an injustice to the private operators for the reporter to insinuate that all of them had gone ahead to make payments despite the ban. And if anyone among them had done so prior to the official statement by Saudi Arabia, any operator so involved knows that Saudi authorities have systems in place for them to recover their deposits without collision. NAHCON will always safeguard the rights of pilgrims whether under private or state quota.

Again the report it was stated that, “no fewer than 80, 000 Nigerians were on the trip list out of 95,000 slots given to Nigeria by Saudi authorities”. The Commission is interested in knowing how the reporter arrived at this figure because as the apex body in charge of Hajj in Nigeria, NAHCON has not disclose this figure anywhere nor do we claim to have recorded such a number. Due to apprehension associated with COVID-19 pandemic and Hajj, many intending pilgrims were reluctant in making deposits. Total of registered pilgrims for 2020 Hajj on the Commission’s e-Hajj portal is 13, 457.

Journalism should be about reporting facts rather than fiction. It is unfortunate that while the Commission is always ready to support any researcher with data when required, any writer would abandon professionalism for spurious allegations.

RE: LAGOS HAJJ CAMP ABANDONED FOR 20 YEARS

Management of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, NAHCON read with regret a report in Daily Trust Newspaper of 14th July 2020. The report followed the NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan's official visit and inspection of the Lagos Hajj Camp.

In the said news story, the reporter erroneously stated that the Hajj camp had been abandoned for 20 years. At no point during the visit did Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan imply this nor made such a statement.

As far as the Commission is concerned, that proclamation by the reporter is far from the truth and NAHCON would like to put the record straight.

Lagos state Hajj camp has been central in NAHCON's main concerns, as have been all the others, right from the Commission's inception and even before. The buildings in the Lagos camp are ongoing, the land and structures valued at almost a billion Naira. Different Hajj managers in the past 30 years generated funds raised for the construction of the buildings in the Hajj camp.

It is worthy to note that NAHCON's zonal office has been functional in the Hajj Camp site since around 1982. This office has well equipped staff, offices, standby generator and it is responsible for coordinating airlift activities of Southwest region. In August 2011 for instance, a NAHCON visitation panel recommended

in its report that Lagos Pilgrims' Reception Centre Project should be included in NAHCON's short-term development plans. This timing is certainly less than 20 years ago.

Currently, the Lagos camp has at least three almost completed event centers whose funding are mostly fuelled by the Hajj Development Levy. It would be recalled that the Hajj Development Levy was first introduced during the defunct Directorate of Pilgrims Affairs (DPA) under Brigadier-General Ahmad Muhammad Daku (Rtd) as Sole Administrator 1997-1999. Funds generated from the levy were primarily used to purchase medical equipment for the DPA's medical activities in Saudi Arabia.

The levy was reintroduced in 2012 by the 2nd NAHCON Board to serve as an alternative source of funding Hajj Infrastructure across the Country. Lagos state camp benefited with Construction/Renovation of Event Centres and Landscaping at the Hajj Camp with funding from the Hajj Development Levy Projects. It would interest the reader to know that then DPA under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs first awarded the Lagos Hajj Camp contract in the 80s but could not be completed due to funding and other challenges. This was revived in 2018 and re-awarded by NAHCON to Messrs Gridline Nigeria Ltd and the construction has attained 85% completion. The works on the project yet to be accomplished are

fixing of electrical fittings and painting. Indeed, the Hajj camp in Lagos Airport has been operational as an extension to the main Hajj camp due to the former's convenience being located inside the airport. This does not however mean that the main project has been abandoned. Instead, the airport camp is complementary to the main camp so as to hasten screening and departure of intending pilgrims from Southwest zone to Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, work has continued on the main site, which will be put to use for the general public and Muslim Ummah in particular immediately after it is commissioned.

The present NAHCON Chairman was in Lagos on Monday 13th July as part of his assessment tour of all ongoing projects across the country and to explore other means of financing other projects in the camps. It is reiterated here that the Chairman made no insinuation close to the project being abandoned. Instead, he had commended the contractors for the extent of work accomplished and encouraged them to expedite action for utilization of the buildings to commence.

Hence, the Commission would like a retrieval and corrigendum on the said story due to the embarrassment it has caused the current Chairman and the Commission in general.

NAHCON SEEKS COMPLETION OF LAGOS HAJJ CAMP

The Chairman of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan has sought the assistance of the Lagos State Government for the completion of the Akowonjo-Alimosho Hajj Camp, saying the camp has remained in its present status because of lack of fund.

The NAHCON Chairman made this appeal during the inspection visit to Akowonjo hajj camp in Lagos. He stressed the need to generate revenue internally to execute the project, saying: "What the Federal Government's agency has been able to accomplish so far on the camp, was achieved through the development levy being collected from every intending pilgrim from the South West states, which include Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Edo, as well as the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Private Tour operators".

He appealed to stakeholders not to allow the project to be moribund, saying that the development levy which is the major source of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) for the agency was initially fixed at N5,000 but has now been reduced to N3,000 on each intending pilgrim.

The Commissioner for Home Affairs, Prince Anofiu Olanrewaju Elegushi, also appealed to NAHCON to give all the State's Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Boards the right to generate revenue internally in order to have enough fund to effectively execute the hajj operation in their respective states. He maintained

that by availing the State's Muslim Boards the opportunity of generating revenues internally, they would be financially buoyant to carry out hajj operations without putting much burden on their respective state governments.

"By reducing the huge expenses usually being incurred by the states during hajj operation, the state governments would be able to channel the fund to other equally important projects that will be beneficial to the generality of the people," he said. While hailing the NAHCON chairman and his management team on his effort so far in improving hajj administration in Nigeria, Elegushi urged the management to consider building an Islamic Centre on the expanse of land where a standard Muslim school could be established to cater for the children of Muslims residing in the Alimosho Local Government and its environs while the already completed structures could be converted to hostel for the admitted students.

He added that such legacy if established would bridge the gap of shortages of standard Muslim schools in the area and serve as a source of revenue generation for the organization.

He also advised NAHCON management to commercialize the Multi-Purpose hall in the camp with a view to renting it out to interested individuals/organizations for the staging of Islamic occasions and events. He stressed that any individual/organization applying to use the hall must be made to obey lay down rules and regulations in line with Islamic injunctions. **10**

NAHCON MEETS NASS ON 2020 HAJJ, NITDA ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), in collaboration with Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), has concluded plans on a strategic digital transformation of Hajj operations and management in Nigeria. The rollout meeting was held Tuesday, 9th, June 2020 in the Hajj House conference room. Speaking during the parley with the NITDA team, NAHCON's Commissioners, senior management and ICT staff, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan, Chairman NAHCON, outlined the importance of digital technology in the 21st century. He said the plan is to make the Commission's operations ICT driven for efficiency and advancement.

Leader of the NITDA team, presented a transformation planning model to NAHCON, emphasising that the strategy they want to adopt needs the leadership and staff to have a mindset ready to think out of the box like a private venture.

He called for a resolve by staff and management to accept digital transformation culture and be ready to switch to it and to sustain it. He explained the implementation roadmap.

It is believed that with the transformation program, pilgrims' experience will be greatly improved through an end-to-end automation of services to them. It is also hoped that the system will help increase NAHCON's revenue through cutting of waste and creativity in revenue generation.

A pilot team comprising a select management staff, some ICT members and the NITDA facilitators was formed during the

meeting.

In another development, the NAHCON Chairman and his entourage visited the National Assembly on the invitation of the House Committee on Pilgrimage. The visit was to update the committee members on Hajj 2020 preparations by the Commission and to identify areas where the NAHCON needed assistance.

In his presentation, the NAHCON helmsman explained the 2020 Hajj feasibility studies conducted by the Commission and adjustment strategies deployed against the global challenge posed by Covid-19. He disclosed that NAHCON is in consultation with critical stakeholders in any decision it will take while soliciting the NASS members' intervention where it has difficulties. Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan reiterated NAHCON's preparedness whether Hajj takes place or not.

Meanwhile, the NAHCON delegation also seized the opportunity to brief the Chairman Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs of NAHCON's plans in respect of Hajj 2020. Senator Muhammad Adamu Bulkachuwa appreciated the team and assured them of the Committee's readiness to assist the Commission where it needs help. He commended the NAHCON leadership for always keeping them updated.

Similarly, Hon. Abubakar Hassan Nalaraba commended the NAHCON team's presentation and assured them of their support always.



NAHCON Chairman/ CEO Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan Chairman listening to presentation by representatives of Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) on strategic digital transformation of Hajj operations

BAGUDU SETS UP COMMITTEE TO REFUND 2020 HAJJ DEPOSITS TO INTENDING PILGRIMS

The Kebbi State Governor, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, has approved the setting up of a Committee to refund Hajj deposits to the affected 2020 intending pilgrims, who could not travel to the Holyland of Saudi Arabia for the exercise.

This followed the cancellation of the 2020 Hajj exercise by the Saudi Arabian Government, due to the Covid – 19 Pandemic.

The Secretary to the State Government, Babale Umar Yauri confirmed this in a signed and released to newsmen in Birnin Kebbi.

The committee's terms of reference according to the statement, include; to ensure the refund of the money collected from intending pilgrims, who were unable to perform the year

2020 Hajj exercise due to Covid-19 pandemic.

It will also ensure the refund of money deposited to National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), by the State Pilgrims Welfare Agency.

The SSG explained that the Committee has two weeks within which to complete its assignment, as well as submit its report to the State Government.

He stated that, Alhaji Haruna Abubakar Maitandu will serve as the Chairman of the committee, while Garba Salis Hamis, Liman Usman Suru, Lawal Mai Kwalla, Abubakar Atiku Alaramma and Zayyanu Shehu Sanka, Chairman, Hajj Guides are members.