



RECEIVED
Dec 12, 2020

BY TIME:
DOC NO.

E-2020-05359

09:19am

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020 - 010

GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS AND RECOGNITION OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9593 or the *Tourism Act of 2009*, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation and activities of all tourism enterprises;

WHEREAS, Section 2 (d) of R.A. No. 9593 provides that the State shall seek to create a favorable image of the Philippines within the international community, thereby strengthening the country's attraction as a tourism destination and eventually paving the way for other benefits that may result from a positive global view of the country;

WHEREAS, Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9997 or the *National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009* declares that it is a policy of the State to ensure the rights and well-being of Muslim Filipinos with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions and institutions, as well as to further ensure their contribution to national goals and aspirations and to make them active participants in nation-building;

WHEREAS, in recognition of the beliefs, traditions, and customs of Muslim travelers and tourists, which is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world, there is a need to ensure quality and appropriate service by Accommodation Establishments to the growing Muslim Market by providing guidelines for operations of the same;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, these guidelines governing the operation and recognition of Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments are hereby issued:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Short Title. - This Circular shall be known as the "*Guidelines on the Operations and Recognition of Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments.*"

Section 2. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of these Guidelines, the following terms shall mean:

- a) "Accommodation Establishments" shall refer to establishments operating primarily for accommodation purposes including, but not limited to, hotels, resorts, apartment hotels, tourist inns, motels, pension houses, private homes used for homestay, ecolodges, serviced apartments, condotels, and bed and breakfast facilities.
- b) "Accreditation" shall refer to a certification issued by the Department to a tourism enterprise that officially recognizes it as having complied with the minimum standards for the operation of tourism facilities and services.
- c) "Certificate of Recognition" shall refer to the certification issued by the Department to a DOT-Accredited Accommodation Establishment for having complied with the requirements and qualifications of a Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment after undergoing an additional application and evaluation process. Recognition is evidenced by a Certificate of Recognition as a Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment.
- d) "Department or DOT" shall refer to the Department of Tourism.

- e) "Halal" shall refer to food and non-food products that are *lawful* or *permissible* under Shari'ah.
- f) "Halal Certification" refers to third party attestation of conformance to Halal standards and guidelines related to products, processes, systems or persons.
- g) "Halal Tourism Focal Unit" refers to a special unit under the Office of the Tourism Regulation, Coordination and Resource Generation (TRCRG) tasked to provide administrative and technical supervision over all Halal-related matters in the DOT.
- h) "Halal food" shall refer to food that is permissible to eat according to the teachings of Islam.
- i) "Haram / Non-Halal" shall refer to food or non-food products considered unlawful under Islamic teachings, although often used in conjunction with Halal, mostly with regard to food.
- j) "Inspection Checklist" shall refer to the list of standards and requirements that shall be used as reference by the Inspection Team to facilitate the inspection of an Accommodation Establishment applying for a Certificate of Recognition as a Muslim- Friendly Accommodation Establishment, in the form attached as **ANNEX A**.
- k) "Islam" shall refer to a monotheistic religion/faith that is defined primarily by the belief in submission to the One True God alone, and in accepting Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the final prophet of God.
- l) "Management" shall refer to the proprietor, general manager, managing partner, or president of the Accommodation Establishment.
- m) "Muslim" shall refer to a person who professes Islam as his/her religion and observes the tenets and principles of Islam.
- n) "Muslim-Friendly" shall refer to any facility or service which takes into account the needs of Muslims other than food, which can only be classified as Halal or non-Halal.
- o) "Muslim-Friendly Tourism" shall refer to provision of goods and services in accordance with the needs and requirements of Muslim tourists and travelers.
- p) "Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments" shall refer to DOT-Accredited Accommodation Establishments that are given a Certificate of Recognition for having complied with the qualifications and requirements of a Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment.
- q) "Qiblah" shall refer to the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays.
- r) "Ramadan" shall refer to the ninth (9th) month of the Islamic year, observed as sacred, with fasting practice from dawn to sunset.
- s) "Shari'ah" shall refer to Islamic Law derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah/Hadith (traditions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) as primary sources; and Ijma (Consensus of the Muslim scholars) and Qiyas (analytical deduction) as secondary sources.

- t) "Wudhu" shall refer to Ablution or a cleansing ritual to be completed before performing Salah (Muslim/Islamic Prayers). It includes the washing of the hands, face, forearms, forehead, ears and feet with water.

Section 3. Scope and Application. - This Memorandum Circular shall apply to all DOT Accredited Accommodation Establishments in the Philippines that intend to apply for a Certificate of Recognition as a Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment.

II. OPERATIONS OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

Section 4. Reception Counter or Front Desk. The following must be made available at the reception counter or front desk:

- a. Important contact numbers such as that of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), Halal Board, and embassies;
- b. Information on Muslim-Friendly rooms, including its facilities, services, amenities, and other related details;
- c. A list of nearby mosques or Islamic Centers;
- d. Adequate information on the nearest Halal-certified restaurants or Muslim-Friendly restaurants; and
- e. Information regarding prayer times or a call of prayer (i.e. *Salah*) shall be available.

Section 5. Reception or Front Desk Officer.

- a. Front desk personnel attending to Muslim guests must be knowledgeable on the basic principles and fundamentals of Halal, as embodied in these Guidelines and the attached Annexes, and as may be acquired in other training and/or seminars on Halal and Muslim-Friendly tourism;
- b. Front desk personnel and all staff greeting and receiving Muslim guests shall incorporate the common greeting in Islam which is "Assalamu Alaikum" (Peace be unto you), responded by "Wassalamualaikum" (Peace be upon you too);
- c. Front desk personnel must be familiar with the Muslim-Friendly facilities of the establishment and amenities in the Muslim-Friendly guest rooms;
- d. Front desk personnel shall present themselves in such a manner that the organization's good reputation and image is always maintained;
- e. Dress code or uniforms shall be modest and appropriate. A redesigned uniform, especially for those attending to Muslim guests, is encouraged. Wearing of headscarf is recommended for female personnel to represent the Muslimah's image; and
- f. Employment of at least one (1) Muslim staff by the Accommodation Establishment is encouraged.

Section 6. Muslim-Friendly Guest Rooms

- a. At least five percent (5%) of the total number of rooms in the Accommodation Establishment shall be assigned as Muslim-Friendly Guest Rooms;

- b. The following shall be made available inside Muslim-Friendly Guest Rooms:
1. A *Qiblah* directional sticker;
 2. A prayer mat;
 3. Muslim Holy Book (*Qur'an*), including a provision for its proper storage and guidelines in handling the same to guide the non-Muslim staff of the accommodation establishments; and
 4. Clean water supply in bathrooms, with bidets or hand showers for the performance of Wudhu or Ablution.
- c. Islamic program/s on the Cable TV shall be available and guests shall likewise be advised on such upon check-in. A list of said channels shall be available in the guest room;
- d. Qur'an reading in the guest rooms, in addition to music, shall be available;
- e. A minibar for Halal-certified snacks and light refreshments in the guest rooms shall be available;
- f. Alcoholic beverages (either complimentary or in the mini-bar) in rooms to be occupied by Muslim guests shall be prohibited; and
- g. For Accommodation Establishments with a kitchenette or in-room kitchen, there shall be a separate and different set of silverwares, plates, glass wares, pots, knives, etc. for the use of Muslim guests.

Section 7. Halal Food and Beverages

- a. Halal food shall be available in the Accommodation Establishment. A list of available Halal products shall be accessible at the reception, restaurant, and guest room;
- b. Availability of a Muslim-Friendly restaurant in the premises of the Accommodation Establishment is encouraged;
- c. Proper segregation and identification of Halal food from Non-Halal food through placing of proper signage for caution, including utensils and condiments, shall be implemented;
- d. Halal food shall be separated from non-halal food, when serving individually packed meals; and
- e. Meals for *Sahur* (pre-dawn breakfast) and *Iftar* (evening meal) during the Ramadan shall be available upon request.

Section 8. Kitchen

- a. A separate area for the preparation of Halal Food, with separate and different sets of silverwares, plates, glass wares, pots, knives and etc., shall be available;
- b. A separate cold room or refrigerator with proper signage for Halal and Non-Halal food/ingredients shall be available;
- c. Sanitation and proper handling of Halal food and products brought into the establishment shall be implemented;
- d. Disinfection and proper cleaning of the kitchen shall be implemented;

- e. A standard operating procedure (SOP) for kitchen operation, from purchasing to storage of halal food or ingredients shall be available; and
- f. A designated purchasing manager for Halal food/ingredients is encouraged.

Section 9. Public Areas

a. Public Prayer Room/ Area

1. A public prayer room or set-up prayer area, with nearby or adjacent restroom for the performance of "Wudhu" or Ablution, shall be available in the Accommodation Establishment for in-house and/or non-billeted guests attending a function therein.
2. There shall be a separate prayer area for men and women. If separate rooms are not available, a barrier or a separator must be installed, such as a screen or curtain to divide the room for separate use of Muslim men and women;
3. The public prayer room/area shall be equipped with a prayer mat or with carpeted flooring for the comfort of the Muslim guests;
4. A Qiblah directional sticker and a Muslim Holy Book must also be placed in the public prayer room;
5. Clean water supply in common restrooms, with bidets or hand showers for the performance of Wudhu or Ablution, shall be provided, particularly those restrooms which are nearby or adjacent to a public prayer room or set-up prayer area; and
6. The public prayer room and Ablution areas must be located in a suitable area, away from the entertainment, loading or garbage disposal area, and shall be kept clean at all times.

b. Recreational Areas

1. A Muslim family-friendly entertainment room shall be available;
2. Separate wellness and recreational facilities and swimming pool for men and women are encouraged. If such is not possible, a separate allocation of certain hours for Muslim men and women to use the wellness services can be provided; and
3. Non-halal activities, such as the serving of alcoholic beverages or playing in casino, are discouraged.

Section 10. Hotel Transport Service

- a. Transportation services to a nearby local mosque shall be available; and
- b. For transport service providers, the driver must be aware of the basic fundamentals and principles in treating Muslims, as embodied in these guidelines and the attached annexes, and as may be acquired in other training and/or seminars on Halal and Muslim-Friendly touri

III. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Section 11. Filing of Application. Any DOT-Accredited Accommodation Establishment may apply for a Certificate of Recognition as Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment with the DOT Regional Office having jurisdiction over its region.

Section 12. Simultaneous Filing of Application. Application for DOT-Accreditation and Certificate of Recognition as Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment may be filed simultaneously. However, the Certificate of Recognition will be granted only upon issuance of a DOT Accreditation.

Section 13. Documentary Requirements. The following are the documentary requirements for the application of a Certificate of Recognition as a Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment:

- a. Valid Certificate of DOT Accreditation, or proof of application for DOT Accreditation;
- b. Letter of intent stating the reason for the application and the desire to be recognized as Muslim-Friendly signed by the Management; and
- c. Halal Certification or Undertaking to apply for Halal Certification within two (2) years of being granted a Certificate of Recognition as Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment.

Section 14. Inspection Team. An Inspection Team shall evaluate and assess the qualifications of the DOT-Accredited Accommodation Establishments that have applied for Certificates of Recognition as Muslim-Friendly Establishments.

- a. The DOT Office of Tourism Standards and Regulation (OTSR) shall be the primary arm of the DOT in facilitating the application process of the Accommodation Establishments, to be assisted by the designated Halal Tourism Focal Unit of the Department;
- b. The DOT Regional Offices, for purposes of cost-saving measures and efficiency in the service, shall be asked to provide assistance in the conduct of inspection and facilitate the application of the accommodation establishments within their region; and
- c. The Inspection Team shall be composed of the following:
 1. One (1) representative from the DOT-OTSR;
 2. One (1) representative from the DOT's designated Halal Tourism Focal Unit; and
 3. One (1) representative from the DOT-Regional Office.

Section 15. The Inspection Team shall have the following functions:

- a. Schedule and conduct an audit of the establishments to determine whether the Accommodation Establishment complies with both the basic requirements of DOT Accreditation and the additional standards for a Certificate of Recognition;
- b. Conduct the inspection in the presence of the Management; and
- c. Discuss with the Management the results or their findings.

Upon completion of the above, both the Inspection Team and Management shall sign the Inspection Checklist. The applicant shall also be furnished with a copy of the accomplished checklist.

Section 16. Inspection Checklist. The inspection team shall utilize the Inspection Checklist to facilitate the inspection of Accommodation Establishments. All deficiencies found, as well as the requirements met, shall be noted in the checklist. Likewise, any observation of the applicant or his duly authorized representative present at the time of the inspection on any adverse finding of the team shall be encoded in the Inspection Checklist.

Section 17. Issuance of Certificate of Recognition. If the applicant has satisfactorily complied with the prescribed minimum requirements, the Department shall then issue the Certificate of Recognition in favor of the applicant.

Section 18. Validity of Certificate of Recognition. The Certificate of Recognition shall have the same validity period as that indicated in the DOT-Accreditation Certificate of the Accommodation Establishment, at the time of its issuance, unless sooner revoked by the Department in accordance with relevant DOT issuances.

Section 19. Renewal in Case Halal Certification Has Been Granted or Has Been Applied For. Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments that have been granted a Certificate of Recognition shall be allowed to renew the same in accordance with the following:

- a. In case they are able to secure a Halal Certification, for the duration of the validity of the Halal Certification; or
- b. In case they have submitted proof of application for Halal Certification within the two (2)-year period provided under Section 13 (c), for the period that their application remains pending due to inaction of the body required to act on their application or other causes beyond their control.

Section 20. Renewal in Case Halal Certification Has Not Been Granted nor Has Been Applied for. Accommodation Establishments that are not able to secure Halal Certification or have not been able to apply for the same upon the expiration of the two (2)-year period when they are first granted a Certificate of Recognition as Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment shall be allowed to renew their Certificate of Recognition only once.

Thereafter, failure to secure Halal Certification or submit proof of application for the same shall result in the cancellation of their Certificate of Recognition; provided, that the Accommodation Establishment may re-apply for a Certificate of Recognition once it has been granted a Halal Certification.

Section 21. Application Fees. No fees shall be collected for the issuance of the Certificate of Recognition, aside from those already collected for the processing of DOT Accreditation.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 22. Basic Information on the Fundamentals and Principles of Halal. A write-up on the basic information on the fundamentals and principles of Halal for the knowledge and awareness of the Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments is attached herewith as **ANNEX B** and shall form part of these Guidelines.

Section 23. Suppletory Application of other DOT Issuances; Compliance with other relevant issuances. The following DOT issuances shall apply to these Guidelines in suppletory character:

- a. As to the health and safety protocols of Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments, DOT Memorandum Circular No. 2020-002-B or the *Further Amended New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments*; and
- b. As to the operations of Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments under a Community Quarantine, DOT Administrative Order No. 2020-002-C or the *Revised Guidelines on the Operations of Hotels and Other Accommodation Establishments Under a Community Quarantine*.

Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments shall likewise comply with other relevant DOT issuances, and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations issued by relevant government agencies during the validity of the Certificate of Recognition.

Section 24. Separability Clause. The provisions of these Guidelines are hereby declared separable, and in the event that anyone or more such provisions are declared invalid, the validity of all other provisions shall not be affected thereby.

Section 25. Penalties. Any violation of these Guidelines may subject the Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishment to appropriate fines and penalties, including revocation of its Certificate Recognition or DOT Accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

Section 26. Repealing Clause. This Circular repeals, modifies, or amends all other DOT issuances or provisions inconsistent herewith.

Section 27. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

11 December 2020.




BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT
Secretary 





INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments

Mission Order No. _____
Series of _____

Date of Inspection: _____

NAME OF ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENT: _____
 NAME OF OWNER/MANAGER: _____
 BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____
 TELEPHONE NO.: _____ MOBILE NO.: _____
 OFFICIAL E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

NO.	CRITERIA / INDICATOR	YES	NO	REMARKS
DIMENSION 1. GUEST HANDLING				
1.1	RECEPTION COUNTER / DESK	YES	NO	REMARKS
1.	Information on important contact numbers for Muslims (e.g. NCMF, Halal Board, Embassies) is available.			
2.	Information on Muslim-friendly rooms, including its facilities, services, amenities is available			
3.	Information on location of nearby masjids/Islamic centers at reception counter is available.			
4.	Information on location and contact of nearby Halal-Certified and Muslim-Friendly Restaurants is available.			
5.	Information on Salah / prayer times at reception counter is available.			
6.	List of Halal products			
1.2	RECEPTION OR FRONT DESK OFFICER	YES	NO	REMARKS
7.	Staff are knowledgeable on the basic principles and fundamentals of Halal.			
8.	Staff practice of Muslim way of greeting and receiving guests "Assalamu Alaikum" (Peace be unto you), responded by "Wassalamualaikum" (Peace be upon you too).			
9.	Staff are familiar with the Muslim-friendly facilities and amenities of the establishment.			
10.	Staff present themselves in a reputable manner.			
11.	Dress code for staff is modest and appropriate.			

DIMENSION 2.	MUSLIM-FRIENDLY GUEST ROOM	YES	NO	REMARKS
--------------	----------------------------	-----	----	---------

12.	At least 5% of the total number of rooms are Muslim-friendly rooms			
13.	<i>Qiblah</i> directional sticker / marker in rooms			
14.	Clean prayer mat			
15.	Qu'ran is available.			
16.	Hand showers or bidet in bathrooms, with clean water supply for "Wudhu" or Ablution			
17.	Islamic TV channels in rooms			
18.	Qu'ran reading instead of music in rooms			
19.	Mini-bar with Halal certified snacks and light refreshments in rooms			
20.	Separate set of silverwares, plates, glass wares, pots, knives, etc. to be used by Muslim guests for rooms with kitchenette			
21.	List of Halal products			
DIMENSION 3. HALAL FOOD AND BEVERAGES		YES	NO	REMARKS
22.	Availability of Halal food in the establishment			
23.	List of Halal products			
24.	Proper segregation and identification of Halal food from Non-Halal food, including utensils and condiments			
25.	Meals for Sahur (pre-dawn breakfast) and Iftar (evening meal) during the Ramadan			
DIMENSION 4. KITCHEN		YES	NO	REMARKS
26.	Separate area for the preparation of Halal Food			
27.	Separate cold room/refrigerator with proper signage for Halal and Non-Halal food/ingredients			
28.	Sanitation and proper handling of Halal food and products brought into the establishment			
29.	Sanitation and proper cleaning of the Halal Kitchen			
30.	SOP for kitchen operation			
DIMENSION 5. PUBLIC AREAS				
5.1	PUBLIC PRAYER ROOM/ AREA	YES	NO	REMARKS
31.	Separate public prayer room or set-up prayer area for men and women			

32.	Clean prayer mat or carpeted flooring			
5.1	PUBLIC PRAYER ROOM/ AREA	YES	NO	REMARKS
33.	<i>Qiblah</i> directional sticker / marker in rooms			
34.	A Qu'ran is available			
35.	Hand showers or bidet in the public toilet, with clean water supply for "Wudhu" or Ablution			
36.	The public prayer room and Ablution areas are located away from the entertainment, loading or garbage disposal area			
5.2	RECREATIONAL AREAS	YES	NO	REMARKS
37.	A Muslim family-friendly entertainment room			
DIMENSION 6.	HOTEL TRANSPORT SERVICE	YES	NO	REMARKS
38.	Transportation services to a nearby local mosque			
39.	The transport service provider or driver is aware of the basic fundamentals and principles in treating Muslims.			

OPTIONAL REQUIREMENTS				
NO.	CRITERIA / INDICATOR	YES	NO	REMARKS
DIMENSION 1.	GUEST HANDLING			
1.1	RECEPTION OR FRONT DESK OFFICER	YES	NO	REMARKS
40.	At least one (1) Muslim staff is employed			
DIMENSION 3.	HALAL FOOD AND BEVERAGES	YES	NO	REMARKS
41.	Muslim-Friendly Restaurant in the premises			
DIMENSION 4.	KITCHEN	YES	NO	REMARKS
42.	A designated purchasing manager for Halal food/ ingredients is employed.			
DIMENSION 5.	PUBLIC AREAS			
5.2	RECREATIONAL AREAS	YES	NO	REMARKS
43.	Separate wellness and recreational facilities for men and women			
44.	Allocation of certain hours for the use of wellness services by Muslim guests			

RECOMMENDATION

Favourable Unfavourable Hold in Abeyance

REMARKS: _____

PERSON PRESENT/AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

DATE OF INSPECTION:

Printed Name with Signature

(MM/DD/YYYY)

INSPECTION TEAM

We hereby certify that we have conducted an inspection of the above-referred establishment on _____ and that the foregoing report is our evaluation of the facts gathered in the course of said inspection.

INSPECTOR

INSPECTOR

RECOMMENDING APPROVAL:

APPROVED BY:

Chief, Accreditation Division

Regional Director

ANNEX B

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE FUNDAMENTALS AND PRINCIPLES OF HALAL

This section provides a more detailed definition of several concepts in Halal, as well as additional information on the Islamic religion. It also lists particular agencies/offices primarily handling the concerns of Muslims in the country.

Who is a Muslim?

Muslim – refers to a person who professes Islam as his/her religion and observes the tenets and principles of Islam based from the Qur'an and authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and other sources of Islamic jurisprudence and who has a common greeting, "Assalamu Alaikum" (Peace be unto you), and responded by "Wassalamualaikum" (Peace be upon you too).

- i. Allah – an Arabic word that means "God" or, more accurately, "the ONLY God", also referred to as the Lord of the Worlds in Qur'an, and the Master of the Day of Judgment.

What are the Five Pillars of Islam?

Islam – a monotheistic religion/faith that is defined primarily by the belief in submission to the One True God alone, and in accepting Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the final prophet of God. It has Five Pillars which are the belief, prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage.

1. The Belief is believing in God, that there is no God except Allah, and also believing in Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as His messenger.
2. The Prayer which is performed five (5) times a day: dawn, mid-day, afternoon, sunset and night time - and is signaled by Athaan, a call for prayer. One of its purposes is to say thanks for all the blessings God has given.
3. Charity or Zakah, which literally means purification or to give 2.5% of one's wealth to charity, once it reaches the threshold as prescribed by Shari'ah, which are given to eight (8) recipients once a year (during the first month of the lunar calendar).
4. Fasting or Saum is done by every Muslim in the world in the Month of Ramadan. Fasting in Islam requires one to abstain from all forms of food and drink, smoking and intimacy from dawn to sunset which helps the Muslims to remember the poor and needy better, to develop self-control and to overcome selfishness, greed and laziness. Nonetheless, the main reason for fasting is to please God and be closer to Him.
5. Pilgrimage or Hajj which is a visit to Makkah, a sacred city in Saudi Arabia, which should be done by a Muslim at least once in their lives, if they can afford to do so.

What is the essence of Prayer or Salah (Praying Five Times a day)

Prayer or Salah - a key obligatory requirement and is one of the five pillars of Islam. It takes the form of a physical ritual denoting submission to God and includes the recitation of praises of worship, while standing, bowing and then prostrating. These are done while facing the direction of the Qiblah. Each obligatory prayer session may last between 5-10 minutes.

- i. *Qiblah* – This is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays. It is the direction leading to the Ka'ba in the Grand Mosque in Makkah in current day Saudi Arabia.
- ii. *Wudhu* – This is an ablution or cleansing ritual to be completed before performing Salah (Muslim/Islamic Prayers). It includes the washing of the hands, face, forearms, forehead, ears and feet with water.

When and How is Ramadan observed?

Ramadan - refers to the ninth (9th) month of the Islamic year, observed as sacred, with fasting practice from dawn to sunset.

As one of the five pillars of Islam, it is a compulsory form of worship for all Muslim adults, although there are exemptions for the ill and weak. Muslims may opt not to fast while travelling, although most Muslim travelers nowadays opt to fast anyway due to the comfortable facilities available while travelling.

Fasting, in the Islamic sense, requires one to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and intimacy from dawn to dusk. When fasting, Muslims will continue with their normal day-to-day activities; however, they will also allocate additional time and effort towards other religious activities such as reciting the Qur'an, frequenting the Mosque for extra prayers, increasing their charitable work, etc.

The fasting period begins at dawn and ends promptly at dusk which is calculated very precisely based on the time of sunrise and sunset if physical observation is not possible. Before and after the fasting period, Muslims are allowed to eat their respective meals known as pre-dawn breakfast and evening meal. Pre-dawn breakfast, or *Sahur / Suhoor*, usually occurs at 4:00 a.m. before the first prayer of the day, *fajr*. The evening meal, *Iftar*, can begin once the sunset prayer, *Maghreb*, is finished - normally around 7:30 p.m. Since the Prophet Muhammad broke his fast with dates and a glass of water, Muslims eat dates at both Suhoor and Iftar.

- i. *Mosque* - The sacred Muslim house of worship dedicated to daily prayers and other religious acts. It differs from a simple prayer room, in that an Imam (prayer leader) officially conducts the five daily prayers in congregation.
- ii. *Qu'ran* – This refers to the divinely revealed scripture given to Muhammad (peace be upon him), and considered by Muslims to be the literal Speech of Allah given to Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Arabic language. Since Muhammad is considered the last prophet of God, the Qu'ran is believed to be the final revelation from God to humanity.

What is Halal?

Halal - is an Arabic word that generally means: "allowed, permissible, or lawful" under Shari'ah (Islamic Law), taken from the Quranic verse on Halal which states that:

"O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth (that is) lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 168)

Halal is said to be more than a label but an assurance of quality, safety, hygiene and cleanliness. A Halal Logo symbolizes confidence, and serves as an assurance to the Muslim consumers that the products offered are *Halal*. The logo is also a mechanism to monitor Halal food through labelling, further providing an informed choice to all consumers on food purchase.

- i. *Halal* food – This refers to food that is permissible for consumption according to the teachings of Islam.

What is Haram?

Haram – refers to anything considered unlawful under Islamic teachings and is often used in conjunction with Halal, mostly with regards to food. It includes:

- i. Food of animal origin such as pigs and boars - which are prohibited based on religious aspect and scientific point of view; dogs, snakes and monkeys, carnivorous animals with claws and fangs such as lions, tigers, bears, crocodiles and other similar animals, birds of prey with claws such as eagles, vultures, and other similar birds, pests such as rats, centipedes, scorpions and other similar animals, and animals forbidden to be killed in Islam i.e., ants, bees, frogs and woodpecker birds;
- ii. Food of plant origin such as intoxicating and hazardous/poisonous plants except when the toxin or hazard can be eliminated during processing;
- iii. Alcoholic drinks and all forms of intoxicating and hazardous / poisonous drinks, and
- iv. Food additives derived from the above items (i-iii).

What is Muslim-Friendly?

The term "Muslim-friendly" can be used for any facility or service which takes into account the needs of Muslims. For example, an Airport which has prayer facilities and Halal food, will be a Muslim-friendly Airport. Although the term "Halal-Friendly" is sometimes used in place of "Muslim-Friendly", in most cases the latter term will be more appropriate.

However, when it comes to food, they can only be classified as "Halal" or "non-Halal". Food for Muslims cannot be classified as "Halal-Friendly" or "Muslim-Friendly". As such, food in a restaurant can only be either Halal or non-Halal.

Proposed Philippine Category Level of Muslim-Friendly Food Establishment:

- a. **Level I** – serves pork but has a separate Halal kitchen (No Halal Certification).
- b. **Level II** – serves Halal meat only and does not serve liquor (Kitchen does not have Halal Certification).
- c. **Level III** – Halal Certified Kitchen or a kitchen attested by a Halal Certifying Body to have conformed with the standards and guidelines provided for the same.

What agencies / offices deal with the concern of our Muslim brothers and sisters?

a. **Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board**

Under Section 5, Republic Act No. 10817 or the “Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2016”. provides for the creation of the Halal Board

“SECTION 5. Creation of Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board. – To ensure the attainment of the objectives of this Act, there is hereby created the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board, herein referred to as the Halal Board. The Halal Board shall be the policy-making body on Halal export development and shall set the overall direction for the implementation of the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program. It shall be attached to the Department of Trade and Industry.

In the performance of its mandate, the Halal Board shall institutionalize the involvement of Muslim Filipino people’s organizations and non-government organizations through membership in consultative or advisory bodies, coordination of activities with government agencies concerned with Halal industry development, and participation in regular consultative mechanisms such as public hearings and roundtable discussions.”

b. **National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCFM)**

Upon the passage of R.A. No. 10817, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCFM) is now tasked to lead the promotion and development of the domestic halal programs of government, in partnership with the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA), other government agencies, and LGUs with considerable Muslim Populations as the Board’s Vice-Chairperson and pursues the following as guided by the mandate of the Philippine Halal Export Board.

c. **Department of Tourism through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Mindanao** under the Office of the Undersecretary for Tourism Regulation, Coordination and Resource Generation, per its membership in the Halal Board and Department Order No. 2018-127.