

## Ensure waqaf uniformity

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THE Department of Awqaf, Zakat and Haj (Jawhar) and the Malaysian Waqaf Foundation (YWM) are formulating the National Waqaf Master Plan 2025-2030 (NWMP) to coordinate and streamline waqaf administration.

This plan brings together state religious councils, YWM, Jawhar, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the private sector involved in waqaf.

The NWMP, set to be launched next year, promises to improve waqaf administration with YWM serving as the centralised body for waqaf administration and management.

Waqaf, a system of charity or gifts given for the sake of Allah for the Muslim public's benefit, is a testament to the inclusivity and generosity of Muslims.

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Waqaf can be in the form of land, property or money.

The donors hand over their ownership of these assets and funds to the waqaf administrator (trustee) to be administered for the benefit and development of Muslims.

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Waqaf recipients and beneficiaries can include non-Muslims, depending on the intention of the waqaf grantor or the decision of the waqaf administrator for the public's benefit and wellbeing.

Typically, waqaf takes the form of real estate, and states can administer it based on the provisions of the federal and state constitutions, state Islamic religious administration enactments and waqaf enactments.

The challenges include lack of funds; waqaf-related scams; corruption; incompetent administration; shortage of expertise in land and property development, business development, investment, philanthropy and corporate social responsibility; issues involving governance and legal matters; and lack of leadership and professionalism among waqaf administrators.

These issues hinder the development of waqaf assets and funds. As a result, waqaf properties may remain undeveloped or abandoned, going against Islamic principles.

The lack of uniformity and integration of law, administration, policy, direction, and implementation of waqaf in the country is a significant issue.

This lack of uniformity leads to inefficient development of waqaf properties.

So, I believe that the proposed National Waqaf Development Act, if implemented in consenting states, could address this issue and ensure a consistent and efficient development of waqaf properties.

Jawhar aims to lead the way in developing waqaf assets and funds in Malaysia.

However, it has been unable to standardise and coordinate the management and development of waqaf assets.

This is due to a lack of cooperation from the states and the absence of consistent and coordinated waqaf development law.

Therefore, it is imperative to implement a uniform National Waqaf Development Act for consenting states.

This act, in accordance with Article 76(1)(b) of the Constitution, should balance the interests of the states, waqaf administrators, endowments, waqaf donors and the central government.

It is crucial that abandoned waqaf properties are expeditiously developed for the benefit of the community, and the proposed NWMP is a step towards achieving this goal.

Lastly, providing additional tax relief would encourage more people to participate in waqaf, strengthening the NWMP.

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