

Signing of bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement between India and Saudi Arabia

Ministry of Minority Affairs

Signing of bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement between India and Saudi Arabia

Posted On: 08 JAN 2018 2:20PM by PIB Delhi

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi today said that Saudi Arabia has given the green signal for India's decision to revive the option of sending Haj pilgrims through sea route also and officials from both the countries will discuss on all the necessary formalities and technicalities so that Haj pilgrimage through sea route can be started in the coming years.

A decision in this regard was taken yesterday, during the signing of bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement between India and Saudi Arabia by Shri Naqvi and Haj and Umrah Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Dr Mohammad Saleh bin Taher Benten at Makkah.

Shri Naqvi said that sending pilgrims through ships will help cut down travel expenses significantly. "It will be a revolutionary, pro-poor, pilgrim-friendly decision", Shri Naqvi added. The practice of ferrying Haj pilgrims between Mumbai and Jeddah by waterways was stopped from 1995.

The Minister said that another advantage with ships available these days is they are modern and well-equipped to ferry 4,000 to 5,000 persons at a time. They can cover the 2,300-odd nautical miles one-side distance between Mumbai and Jeddah within just 3-4 days. Earlier, the old ships used to take 12 to 15 days to cover this distance.

Shri Naqvi said that last year he had discussed the option to revive sea route for Haj pilgrimage with Transport and Shipping Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari. Now, after the green signal from the Saudi Arabia Government, officials from India and Saudi Arabia will discuss all the issues related to Haj pilgrimage through sea route. He said that this time Haj 2018 has been made 100 per cent digital/online. India's transparent and digital Haj process has been lauded by Saudi Arabia Government.

Shri Naqvi said that for the first time Muslim women from India will go to Haj without "Mehram" (male companion). Separate accommodation and transport has been arranged for these women Haj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia and women "Haj Assistant" will be deployed for their assistance.

He pointed out that more than 1300 women have applied to go for Haj without male "Mehram" and all of these women will be exempted from lottery system and allowed to proceed to Haj. Women above 45 years of age, who wish to go for Haj but who don't have a male companion, are allowed to travel for Haj in groups of 4 or more women according to the new Haj policy of India.

He pointed out that his meeting with Saudi Arabia's Haj & Umrah Minister His Excellency Dr Mohammad Saleh Benten was very fruitful, as a constructive discussion was held on whole gamut of issues related to the Indian Haj pilgrims and Haj pilgrimage.

On behalf of the people and Government of India, Shri Naqvi, extended gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Excellency Saudi Arabia King Salman bin Abdul Aziz al Saud, for his keen personal interest and initiative in organising a successful Haj 2017. "We are confident that under the dynamic and visionary leadership of His Excellency Saudi Arabia King Salman bin

Abdul Aziz al Saud, the excellent relationship between India and Saudi Arabia will be further strengthened and reach new heights”, he said

ShriNaqvi said that India and Saudi Arabia share the ideals of global peace, progress and prosperity. “We are tied together with strong civilizational, cultural, economic and political links. The regular visits by the leaders and senior-level officials of the two nations have further strengthened the relationship between the two nations”, the Minister stated. “The visit of the Prime Minister,ShriNarendraModi, to Saudi Arabia during April 2016has added new dimensions to our vibrant relationship”, he added.

Shri Naqvi said that Haj pilgrimage is one of the strongest pillars of India-Saudi Arabia ties.

The Minister emphasised that about 3 lakh 59 thousand application have been received for Haj 2018. “For the first time, we have given option to Haj pilgrims to opt for another embarkation point. This will ensure that there is no financial burden on Haj pilgrims even after removal of Haj subsidy. This decision has received overwhelming response:.,ShriNaqvi said.

(Release ID: 1515900) Visitor Counter : 2125

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com