

Hajj success proves Saudi's outstanding ability: HM King

HRH the Premier, HRH Crown Prince hail Saudi Arabia's "sacred responsibility" in organising Hajj rituals



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HM THE KING



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The success of this year's Hajj pilgrimage reflects the keenness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to assume the sacred responsibility of organising the Hajj rituals

HRH CROWN PRINCE

● Although no official figure has been given, local media report there are around 10,000 pilgrims

● Health ministry spokesman said that there were no Covid-19 infections, nor any other major diseases among pilgrims during the Hajj pilgrimage

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday hailed the huge success garnered by this year's Hajj pilgrimage, amid exceptional circumstances, as a direct proof to Saudi Arabia's outstanding ability.

The success proves "Saudi Arabia's outstanding ability and keenness to assume its responsibilities," said King Hamad in the message to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

HM King said the efforts exerted by King Salman and his government to hold Hajj rituals while implementing adequate precautionary measures ensured the highest levels of safety and health for pilgrims.

King Hamad prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant Hajj pilgrims many rewards and forgiveness, wishing Saudi Arabia and its brotherly people further progress and prosperity, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Outstanding ability: HRH PM

HRH Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa said the success proves "anew Saudi Arabia's outstanding ability to organise Hajj rituals" and to provide pilgrims with the highest levels of "comfort" and "safety".

The premier also praised King Salman's noble stances in support of Arab and Islamic nations, which, he said, "reflect the pivotal role Saudi Arabia plays, under its wise leadership."

HRH Premier further congratulated Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Defence Minister, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Advisor to King Salman and Mekka Region Governor, HRH Prince Khalid Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who is also the Head of the Haj Central Committee on Eid Al-Adha and Haj success.

Sacred responsibility: CP

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister said, "The success of this year's Hajj pilgrimage reflects the keenness of Saudi Arabia to assume the sacred responsibility of organising the Hajj rituals."

HRH commended Saudi Arabia's tremendous efforts, led by King Salman and the government, to hold the Hajj pilgrimage by implementing adequate precautionary measures to ensure the highest levels of safety and health for pilgrims.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman also congratulated Saudi Crown Prince HRH Prince Mohammed and Governor of Makkah region HRH Prince Mohammed on

YOU DON'T MISS IT

Even the pebbles used this year to symbolically "stone the devil" have been sanitised, as part of elaborate amenity kits provided by authorities that include disinfectant and masks.



Pilgrims praying on Mount Arafat, southeast of the holy city of Mecca, during the climax of the Hajj pilgrimage this week

the Hajj success.

The 'green' Hajj

Hajj held this year amid exceptional circumstances resulting from the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), ends also leaving a smaller carbon footprint, less waste and opening up the prospects of a 'green Hajj'.

The event, which drew 2.5 million people last year and completed this year with just around 10,000 pilgrims, according to experts, was by all accounts a breath

of fresh air.

According to a Greenpeace expert, it was not about the size of the crowd, but "collective behaviour" that effected the change.

"This year's Hajj, although taking place at a difficult time globally, can be a source of hope," he said.

The scenes in Mecca since the Hajj began on Wednesday are very different from those of past years

Rather than the vast crowds that move between the sites, casting rubbish as they go and sometimes prone to deadly crushes, the movement of the pilgrims has been

limited and orderly.

Even the pebbles they use to symbolically "stone the devil" have been sanitised, as part of elaborate amenity kits provided by authorities that include disinfectant and masks.

"Everything is clean and there are only a few municipal workers collecting the small amounts of garbage," Azim Allah Farha, a pilgrim from Afghanistan who has performed the hajj several times before, said at Mount Arafat, the site of one of the main rituals.

One of those workers, Rahim Fajreddine, recalls

hundreds of tonnes of rubbish -- plastic bags, cans and food plates -- left in past years at the rocky hill outside Mecca where pilgrims pray and repent in the high point of the hajj.

"Large numbers of workers had to be mobilised to remove all the debris they left behind as they passed," he recalled.

Eco awakening

Until recently, the concerns were not really about the environment, but about accommodating as many pilgrims as possible, for the long waiting lists for Muslims, who must complete the Hajj at least once in their lifetime if they are able.

Plans are now set to welcome 30 million pilgrims annually by 2030, Saudi authorities say.

As part in 2018, authorities launched a water recycling programme and posted several signs in multiple languages to encourage pilgrims to dot their bit.

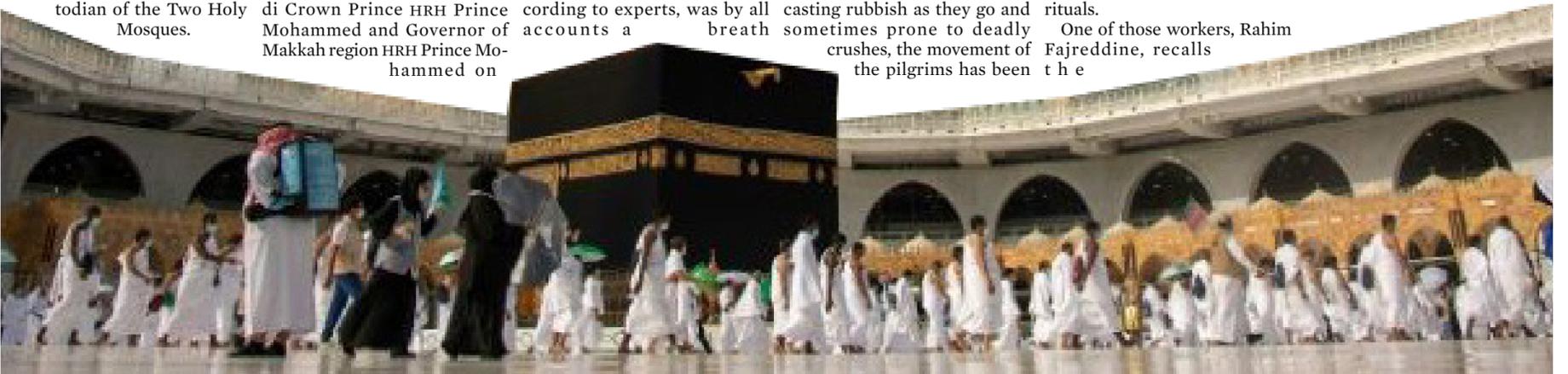
This year, despite the scaled-down pilgrimage, the municipality deployed over 13,000 cleaners to keep the holy site pristine.

This is the future

Nouhad Awwad, the Greenpeace campaigner, said although this year's smaller environmental footprint was greatly due to the pandemic, in going forward this will be the desired outcome.

She imagines "a Hajj with its millions of pilgrims in total symbiosis with their environment, in a Mecca powered by solar energy".

"This is the future we should all be working towards," she insisted.



Pilgrims circumambulate the Kaaba in the Grand mosque in the holy Saudi city of Mecca