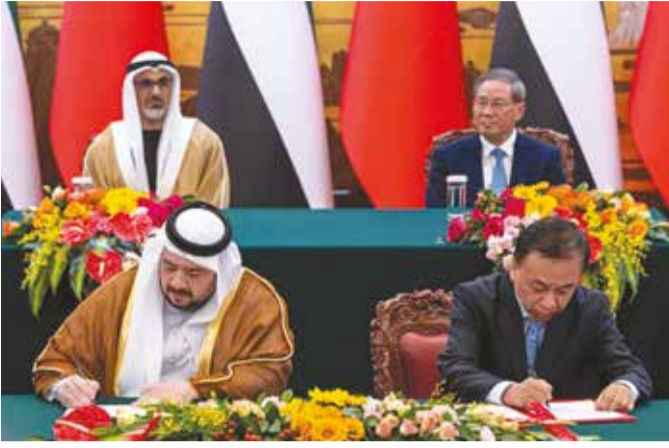


## UAE, China target expanded trade and investment partnership



Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Li Qiang held wide-ranging discussions in Beijing focused on strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the United Arab Emirates and China, and expanding cooperation across key priority sectors.

The meeting took place during an official reception hosted by the Chinese Premier in honour of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, as part of Sheikh Khaled's official visit to China.

At the outset of the talks, Li Qiang welcomed Sheikh Khaled and the accompanying delegation, extending his best wishes for a successful visit that would further enhance bilateral relations and deepen cooperation between the two countries.

Sheikh Khaled expressed appreciation for the warm

reception and hospitality extended by the Chinese side, reaffirming the UAE's commitment to further strengthening its long-standing partnership with China. He emphasised the importance of advancing cooperation across economic and development fields in a way that serves mutual interests and supports sustainable growth in both nations.

He further underscored the need to build on the strong foundations of UAE-China relations by moving towards a more integrated phase of cooperation, focusing on future investment opportunities, strengthening supply chain resilience, and reinforcing the role of both countries as key partners in the global economy.

The discussions came amid growing non-oil trade between the two nations, which reached approximately US\$111 billion in 2025.

# Hajj Rules Tightened

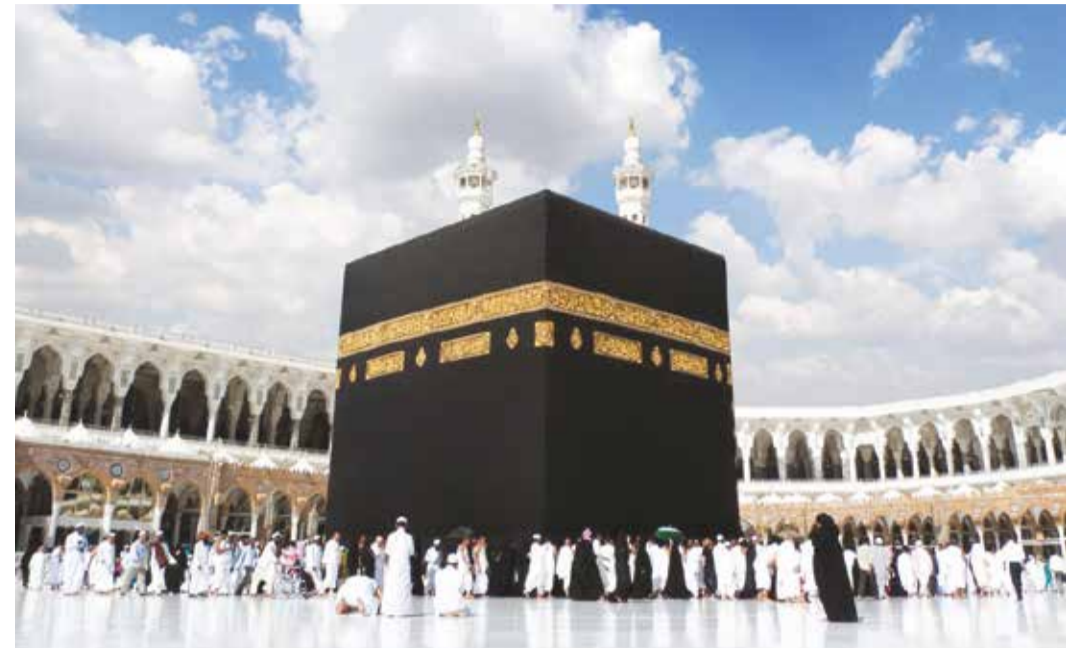
- "No Hajj without permit" policy
- Residents must have official permits to enter Makkah.
- Umrah visa holders must exit Saudi Arabia

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The Ministry of Interior (Saudi Arabia) announced a comprehensive set of regulatory measures for the upcoming Hajj 1447 AH season, introducing strict entry controls for Makkah, updated visa timelines, and reinforced permit requirements aimed at ensuring pilgrim safety and efficient crowd management.

In an official clarification, the Ministry said the measures are part of ongoing efforts to regulate the flow of pilgrims and maintain secure and orderly conditions during one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings. Central to the policy is the enforcement of the rule: "No Hajj without a permit."

Starting Monday, 25 Shawwal 1447 AH (13 April 2026), all residents wishing to enter Makkah must hold an official entry permit issued through approved government channels. Individuals without valid au-



thorization will be denied entry. Exemptions apply to residents holding Makkah-issued identification, valid Hajj permits, or official work permits linked to the holy sites.

Permits are issued digitally through integrated platforms including Absher, Muqem, and the unified permit system Tasreeh.

The Ministry also outlined key deadlines for Umrah procedures. The final date for Umrah visa holders to leave the Kingdom is set for 1 Dhul Qa'dah 1447 AH (18 April 2026). On the same date, issuance of Umrah permits via the Nusuk will be



**The entry into or stay in Makkah will be prohibited for all visa holders from 1 Dhul Qa'dah onward, except for those holding valid Hajj visas.**

suspended for all categories, including citizens, residents, and visitors, until 14 Dhul Hijjah 1447 AH (31 May 2026).

Authorities further confirmed that entry into or stay in Mak-

kah will be prohibited for all visa holders from 1 Dhul Qa'dah onward, except for those holding valid Hajj visas. Officials warned that violating the regulations will result in strict legal penalties.

The Ministry emphasized that the measures are designed to enhance safety, improve logistics, and ensure smooth crowd management during the pilgrimage season. It urged full cooperation with security and regulatory authorities, stressing that compliance is essential for safeguarding pilgrims and maintaining order throughout the Hajj period.

## Regional Food Planning

Focus on strengthening regional supply chains and food resilience

As part of the Kingdom of Bahrain's chairmanship of the 46th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Engineer Asim Abdul Latif Abdullah, Undersecretary for Agriculture and Livestock Affairs at the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture, chaired an extraordinary meeting of undersecretaries responsible for agriculture and food security in GCC member states. The meeting was held via video conferencing.

The session focused on strengthening supply chains and enhancing food security across GCC countries, particularly in light of recent regional developments.

In his remarks, the Undersecretary highlighted the strong and longstanding relations among GCC member states, stressing the importance of continued coordination across various sectors in line with the aspirations of the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

He emphasized the significance of unified GCC efforts in addressing current challenges and en-



hancing the efficiency, resilience, and sustainability of food systems across the region.

He also noted the shared commitment to advancing Gulf initiatives in agriculture and food se-

curity, calling for the development of more effective mechanisms to strengthen the region's food security framework.

Furthermore, he underlined the importance of expanding

intra-GCC cooperation by increasing production capacity and improving resource efficiency, which contributes to a more resilient and sustainable regional food system.

## UN: No military solution to the Middle East conflict

The United Nations stated that there is "no military solution" to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, urging all parties to continue diplomatic efforts following recent talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

According to a statement attributed to the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, no agreement was reached during the Pakistan-hosted discussions. However, the UN described the engagement as a "positive and meaningful step" toward renewed dialogue between the two sides.

The statement emphasized that a comprehensive agreement cannot be achieved quickly, given deep-rooted differences. It called on both parties to continue negotiations constructively in pursuit of a lasting settlement.

The UN also stressed that the ceasefire must be fully respected and added that all violations should stop immediately.

Expressing appreciation for mediation efforts, the Secretary-General acknowledged the role of Pakistan as host, alongside Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Türkiye, and encouraged continued international support for diplomatic initiatives.

The statement further underscored the importance of respecting freedom of navigation under international law, including in the Strait of Hormuz.

It warned that ongoing maritime disruptions have left around 20,000 seafarers stranded on vessels, facing worsening conditions, while



António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

also contributing to wider global economic instability.

According to the UN, disruptions to shipping routes have increased pressure on global trade, including rising costs linked to fuel, transport, and supply chain interruptions. It also noted that disruptions in fertilizer supply chains are worsening food insecurity for vulnerable populations worldwide.

In response, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), working with UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Chamber of Commerce, is advancing efforts to operationalize a mechanism aimed at improving conditions in the Strait of Hormuz, first announced on 27 March.

Separately, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Jean Arnault, continues regional engagement, consulting with key stakeholders to support efforts toward a comprehensive and durable agreement.

