

# Hajj 2026: Mission Begins

Millions of pilgrims brave extreme heat as Mecca temperature hits 47°C

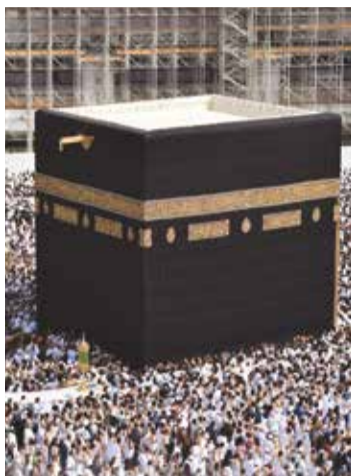
**E**gyptian pilgrim Inas Gamal had one dream: spend her days praying at Islam's holiest site, the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Reality forced a different plan. With temperatures crossing 40°C, the first-time pilgrim retreated to her air-conditioned hotel room for daytime prayers instead.

"It's very hot, much hotter than I imagined," the mother of four told AFP. "I can't adapt. I had planned to perform all my prayers at the Grand Mosque, but I couldn't go down during the day."

She is not alone. As hajj officially begins Monday, more than a million devotees are gathering in Mecca under punishing desert sun — and the worst may be yet to come.

Temperatures Set to Hit 47°C Saudi Arabia's National Center for Meteorology has forecast daytime temperatures of between 42 and 47°C in Mecca this week. For pilgrims from cooler climates, the shock is immediate. Mohamed Nabil, a professor from the Algerian coastal city of Oran — where it is currently a mild 25°C — said he constantly pours water on his face while clocking 30,000 steps a day exploring the city.

British pilgrim Imad Ahmed



said his survival strategy is simple: "I make sure to drink large amounts of water and beverages rich in salts and minerals, because we sweat constantly and are always on the move."

Fans, Mist and Free Ice Water Saudi authorities have deployed an arsenal of cooling measures to protect worshippers. The Grand Mosque runs one of the most powerful air conditioning systems in the world. Outside, giant fans, mist sprayers, and cooled flooring systems line the surrounding areas. Trucks continuously distribute free bottles of ice-cold water.

Ice cream stands are routinely mobbed. Pilgrims seek shade



in building shadows or rest on carpets inside indoor galleries beneath enormous fans while waiting for prayer times.

A Deadly Risk Every Year

Despite all precautions, the hajj's outdoor rites — where most rituals must be performed

— expose pilgrims to heatstroke, fainting, and cardiac arrest. Last year's hajj saw hundreds of deaths linked to extreme heat.

With hajj 2026 beginning in days, authorities and pilgrims alike are racing to stay one step ahead of the sun.

## GCC Secretary-General condemns Hezbollah chief's remarks on Bahrain

**T**he secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council strongly condemned remarks by Naim Qassem concerning Bahrain's internal affairs, accusing the Lebanese group of continued hostile activities against Gulf states.

Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi, secretary general of the GCC, denounced Qassem's statements regarding measures taken by the Bahraini government against individuals convicted of crimes linked to alleged cooperation with Iran's Revolutionary Guards as "irresponsible."

According to a GCC state-



ment, Albudaiwi said those individuals were found coordinating with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to carry out "terrorist and hostile acts" against Bahrain and harm its interests.

## Qatar, Oman discuss Iran-US mediation efforts



Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani held talks on Monday with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi on mediation efforts aimed at easing tensions between the United States and Iran, according to a Qatari statement.

During the phone call, the two officials reviewed bilateral cooperation between Qatar and Oman and discussed ongoing Pakistani mediation efforts involving the United States and Iran.

The talks also focused on coordinating efforts to support mediation initiatives aimed at de-escalation and strengthening regional security and stability.

Shaikh Mohammed stressed the importance of all parties engaging positively with the ongoing mediation efforts, the statement said.

He also underlined the need to address the root causes of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue to secure a lasting agreement and prevent renewed escalation in the region.

## UAE set for Eid Al Adha as prayers

**M**illions across the United Arab Emirates are preparing for Eid Al Adha, expected to begin on Wednesday, May 27, as the country readies for one of the most significant festivals in the Islamic calendar marked by prayers, family reunions and charitable traditions.

Astronomical calculations indicate that the Hajj season for 2026 began on Sunday, May 24, while Arafat Day is expected to fall on Tuesday, May 26, placing the first day of Eid Al Adha on the following day.

Eid prayers are traditionally performed 15 to 20 minutes after sunrise on the first morning of Eid, in accordance with Islamic practice. Preliminary estimates suggest prayer timings across the UAE will range between 5:39am and 5:50am.

Abu Dhabi is expected to hold Eid prayers at around 5:50am,



while Dubai and Al Ain are likely to pray at 5:45am. Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain are expected at 5:43am, Fujairah at 5:41am, Ras Al Khaimah at 5:40am, and Ajman at 5:39am.

Authorities across the country are preparing hundreds of mosques and open-air prayer grounds to accommodate wor-

shippers, with designated sites in residential areas and major city centres expected to host large congregations.

In Abu Dhabi, key prayer locations include Musalla Al Mushrif, Bani Yas Musalla, Mohammed bin Zayed City Musalla and the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque.

Dubai's main Eid prayer sites include Nad Al Hamar Musalla, Al Warqa Musalla, Jumeirah Musalla and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Mosque in Zabeel.

Sharjah will also host prayers at major venues such as Al Badee Musalla, Al Gharb district Musalla and Al Khan Musalla, along with additional sites on Abu Musa Island.

Eid Al Adha is traditionally observed with a set of Sunnah practices, including bathing before prayers, wearing one's best clothes, and reciting the takbeer while travelling to prayer grounds. Muslims also typically refrain from eating until after the Eid prayer and the ritual sacrifice.

## Kuwait, Pakistan discuss strengthening defence cooperation

**K**uwait's Defence Minister Shaikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah met Pakistan's ambassador to Kuwait, Dr Zafar Iqbal, on Monday to discuss bilateral relations and ways to expand cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting focused on issues of mutual interest and efforts to strengthen cooperation across various sectors,

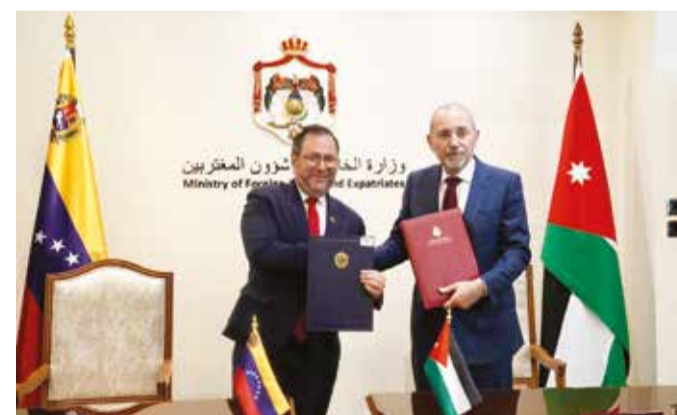
reflecting the close ties shared by Kuwait and Pakistan, according to a statement from Kuwait's Ministry of Defence.

Friendly discussions were exchanged during the talks, the statement said, without providing further details.

Kuwaiti Defence Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah also attended the meeting.



## Jordan, Venezuela sign four agreements to boost bilateral ties



**J**ordan and Venezuela signed four agreements on Monday aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation in politics, agriculture and diplomacy during talks in Amman between the two countries' foreign ministers.

Ayman Safadi, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and Yvan Gil signed the agreements at the Jordanian foreign ministry headquarters.

The deals included a framework cooperation agreement establishing a joint committee for bilateral cooperation between the two governments. The two sides also signed a

memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation, aimed at strengthening collaboration and exchanging expertise in the sector.

Another memorandum established a mechanism for political consultations between the Jordanian and Venezuelan foreign ministries on issues of common interest.

The fourth agreement focused on academic cooperation between the Jordanian Diplomatic Institute and the Pedro Gual Higher Institute for Diplomatic Studies.

The signing ceremony came as Jordan and Venezuela seek to deepen diplomatic engagement and expand cooperation across several sectors.