



# Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi addresses review meeting on Haj 2017 and orientation camp at Mumbai

## New Haj policy-2018 to be unveiled this month: Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

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Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs (Independent Charge) & Parliamentary Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi today said here that the new Haj policy-2018 will be unveiled this month.

At a review meeting on Haj 2017 and 22nd annual Haj orientation camp organised for Haj pilgrims at Haj House, Mumbai, Shri Naqvi said that from the next year, Haj will be organised according to the new Haj policy only.

A high-level committee constituted to frame the new Haj policy is in final stage of shaping the policy and it will be unveiled this month. Shri Naqvi said that the new Haj policy is aimed at making Haj process more transparent and smooth. Providing best facilities to Haj pilgrims is at centre of this new Haj policy.

Shri Naqvi said that reviving the option of sending Haj pilgrims through sea route also is one of the important part of the new Haj policy. Sending pilgrims through ships will help cut down travel expenses by nearly half as compared to airfares. It will be a revolutionary, pro-poor, pilgrim-friendly decision. The practice of ferrying Haj pilgrims between Mumbai and Jeddah by waterways was stopped from 1995.

Shri Naqvi 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 two-three days. Earlier, the old ships used to take 12 to 15 days to cover this distance.

Shri Naqvi said that a high-level meeting will be held under the chairmanship of Shipping Minister, Shri Nitin Gadkari at New Delhi on 28th August. Senior officials from Shipping Ministry and Minority Affairs Ministry will be attending the meeting.

Shri Naqvi said that discussion is going on with Saudi Arabia Government on reviving Haj pilgrimage through sea route also.

Shri Naqvi said that Ministry of Minority Affairs, in cooperation with Haj Committee of India and other concerned agencies, had completed preparations for Haj 2017 well before in time to ensure smooth Haj pilgrimage.

During the review meeting, Shri Naqvi discussed in detail all the issues related to Haj pilgrims with the concerned officials. Shri Naqvi said that facilities given to the Haj pilgrims and their safety is priority of the Central Government.

At the orientation/training camp, officials of Haj Committee of India and other concerned agencies gave various information to the Haj pilgrims.

Haj 2017 started with departure of Haj pilgrims from various embarkation points across the country on 24th July. Saudi Arabia has increased annual Haj quota of India by 34,005. After significant increase in India's Haj quota by Saudi Arabia Government, a total of 1,70,025 people have been going to Haj pilgrimage this year from India out of which 1,25,025 pilgrims are going through Haj Committee of India while 45,000 people are going through Private Tour Operators from 21 embarkation points.

During first phase of Haj 2017, about 65,000 Haj pilgrims have gone to Saudi Arabia. In the first phase, Haj pilgrims went from embarkation points in Delhi, Gaya, Goa, Gauhati, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mangalore, Srinagar and Varanasi.

In the second phase, Haj pilgrims will go from Bangalore, Bhopal, Ranchi, Nagpur, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Cochin, Chennai, Aurangabad, Ahmedabad and Indore. The second phase will end on 26th August.

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