

Saudi Arabia eyes to welcome 3m Bangladeshi travellers by 2030

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Dhaka : Over 332,000 Bangladeshis have already visited Saudi Arabia so far in 2023 and the Kingdom is now eyeing to increase the number of Bangladeshi travellers to 3 million annually by 2030. For this purpose, Saudi Arabia is adopting comprehensive measures to manage the anticipated increase in pilgrims, prioritising a comfortable and safe experience.

Dr Tawfig Al-Rabiah, Minister for Hajj and Umrah and Chairman of Pilgrimage Experience Programme of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, said this during the first-ever road show held in Bangladesh by Saudi Tourism Authority's flagship initiative Nusuk at the capital's BICC on August 24.

"As the custodian of Two Holy Mosques, it is our holy responsibility to make the spiritual journey of the pilgrims safe, accessible, hassle-free

and comfortable. We are constantly working on enriching your pilgrimage experience," mentioned the Minister.

The Minister expressed that all Muslim visitors, regardless of their Saudi visa category, can now partake in the spiritual journey of Umrah.

Also, Muslim visitors can apply for online Umrah visas. The e-Visa system simplifies applications, minimises paperwork, and ensures quick approvals, often in less than 24 hours.

Saudi Arabia is also offering Visa-On-Arrival services to UK/US/Schengen passport holders allowing them to freely perform Umrah and explore the country's unique cultural diversity.

Furthermore, the duration of the Umrah visa has been increased from 30 to 90 days, and a four-day transit visa has also been introduced that enables Muslims to add Umrah as an itinerary stop.

He further stressed that Saudi Arabia currently ensures a safe and welcoming environment for women to travel and perform Umrah without the need to be accompanied by a male guardian.

Zamzam water has also been made available with any type of visa, he noted.

The Kingdom's government has also expanded the high-speed Haramain railway that significantly reduces travel time between Makkah and Madinah, making the journey more convenient and hassle-free, claimed the Minister.

Moreover, significant investments have been made by the Kingdom's government in expanding facilities like hotels, roads, and transport systems, geared towards creating a memorable religious journey for Umrah pilgrims and tourists alike.

Advanced crowd-monitoring technology ensures smooth pilgrim movement and early issue detection.

Expanded medical facilities are now available with seasoned medical teams for emergencies and any urgent health concerns, the Minister further mentioned.



Alhasan Aldabbagh, President-APAC, Nusuk

The government is also regulating prices for trade partners, preventing inflation and ensuring affordability.

The Minister stressed that the Kingdom has achieved a 73 per cent reduction in insurance costs for Umrah performers without sacrificing service quality.

Saudi Arabia has also expanded air routes to cater to more pilgrims, claimed the Minister.

It may be mentioned here, flights from Bangladesh from now onwards will be able to land at any airport in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia following the signing of a new MoU between the two recently.

New integrated digital platform Nusuk launched

Saudi government's flagship initiative-the new customer-centric integrated digital platform Nusuk-organised its first roadshow in Bangladesh to promote its official integrated digital platform (nusuk.sa) for Bangladeshis planning to visit the Kingdom for spiritual and tourism purposes.

Apart from Dr Tawfig Al-Rabiah, Minister for Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a high level Saudi delegation team including Alhasan Aldabbagh, President-Asia Pacific of Nusuk was present during the roadshow.

The roadshow was also attended by several Bangladeshi and Saudi Arabian business organisations including Umrah companies, tour operators, travel agencies and trade associations.

On the sidelines of the roadshow, talking to The Bangladesh Monitor, Alhasan Aldabbagh, President-Asia Pacific, Nusuk, said, "With Nusuk.sa, our aim is to increase the ease and accessibility for Bangladeshi travellers, especially with the growing numbers of Umrah pilgrims."

Nusuk is a one-stop digital solution that makes it easy for any Bangladeshi to book their entire travel by a few cliques. It is available in both website [nusuk.sa] and app formats, added the APAC President of Nusuk.

"There are over 120 services available on the platform and we will continue to add more," said Aldabbagh.

It may be mentioned here, Nusuk is the first integrated app that is designed to simplify travel to Saudi Arabia.

With Nusuk, travellers from all over the world including Bangladesh can easily organise their entire visit to Saudi Arabia, from applying for an e-Visa to booking flights, hotels and internal transportations, be that for Umrah or tourism purposes.

"The idea of the platform is to allow tourism companies to be part of it and offer their services to the people. It is a competitive platform that makes travellers the ultimate winner," he added.

Aldabbagh said the platform will also help Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia to collaborate on tourism and investment sectors.

Apart from the visitors from Bangladesh, the app will also be helpful to the 2.8 million Bangladeshis living in Saudi Arabia, he stressed.

The President further mentioned that Bangladesh historically has been a very important partner of the Kingdom and continues to be a key strategic market to achieve Saudi's Vision of 2030.