

Bangladeshis can travel all over Saudi Arabia with umrah visa

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 10 June, 2022



Dhaka: Like citizens of other countries in the world, Bangladeshis too can now travel the entire Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with umrah visa. The validity of which has been increased to three months from the earlier one month.

Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Bangladesh Issa bin Youssef Al-Duhailan made the announcement while inaugurating the Saudi government's initiative Route to Makkah at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital on June 9.

The State Minister for Religious Affairs Mohammad Faridul Haq Khan and the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mahbub Ali, were also present at the airport on the occasion among other top Bangladeshi officials.

At the event, the Ambassador further said, pilgrims can apply for umrah visa directly online and will receive it by a day.

“After Kuwait, Bangladesh is the second country which we are granting online applications from for umrah visa. The visa will be issued in 24 hours and it will have a validity of three months. Also, the pilgrims will be allowed to travel to other destinations all over the Kingdom with the umrah visa once they are performing umrah,” said Issa bin Youssef Al-Duhailan.

Under the Route to Makkah initiative, the immigration formalities from Saudi Arabia’s end are being carried out at Dhaka Airport. Hence, no Bangladeshi pilgrim will have to wait after arriving in Jeddah. Also, their bags will be taken directly to their respective hotels.

“Before this Road to Makkah initiative, Bangladeshi pilgrims had to wait at Saudi Arabia’s airport for up to 10-11 hours. Pilgrims will not have to suffer from that hassle anymore due to this initiative,” said State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali.

Md Faridul Haque Khan, State Minister for Religious Affairs, said, “This initiative is saving the pilgrims 9-10 hours at least. It has made the travel of our pilgrims to Saudi Arabia hassle free and convenient.”

This year, Bangladesh and four other countries are getting to benefit from this Route to Makkah initiative.

The Makkah Route initiative is part of Saudi Arabia's Guests of God Service Program, which King Salman inaugurated in 2019 and seeks to provide visitors to the holy sites with the finest possible services to help them perform their Hajj rituals easily and comfortably.

The first batch of Hajj 2022 pilgrims from Bangladesh arrived in Jeddah on June 6 through a dedicated Makkah Route lounge at Dhaka’s Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The arrival of this year’s pilgrims from outside Saudi Arabia comes after a two-year interruption brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Makkah Route initiative is being implemented in collaboration with Saudi Arabia’s Health Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Authority of Civil Aviation, the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority, the Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence, the Guests of God Service Program, Saudi Passports, and the Saudi digital security firm Elm Co.

It includes issuing visas, ensuring the pilgrims’ biological characteristics and compliance with health requirements, and codifying and sorting luggage at airports in pilgrims’ home countries. Five countries are in the initiative: Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco, and Bangladesh.

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