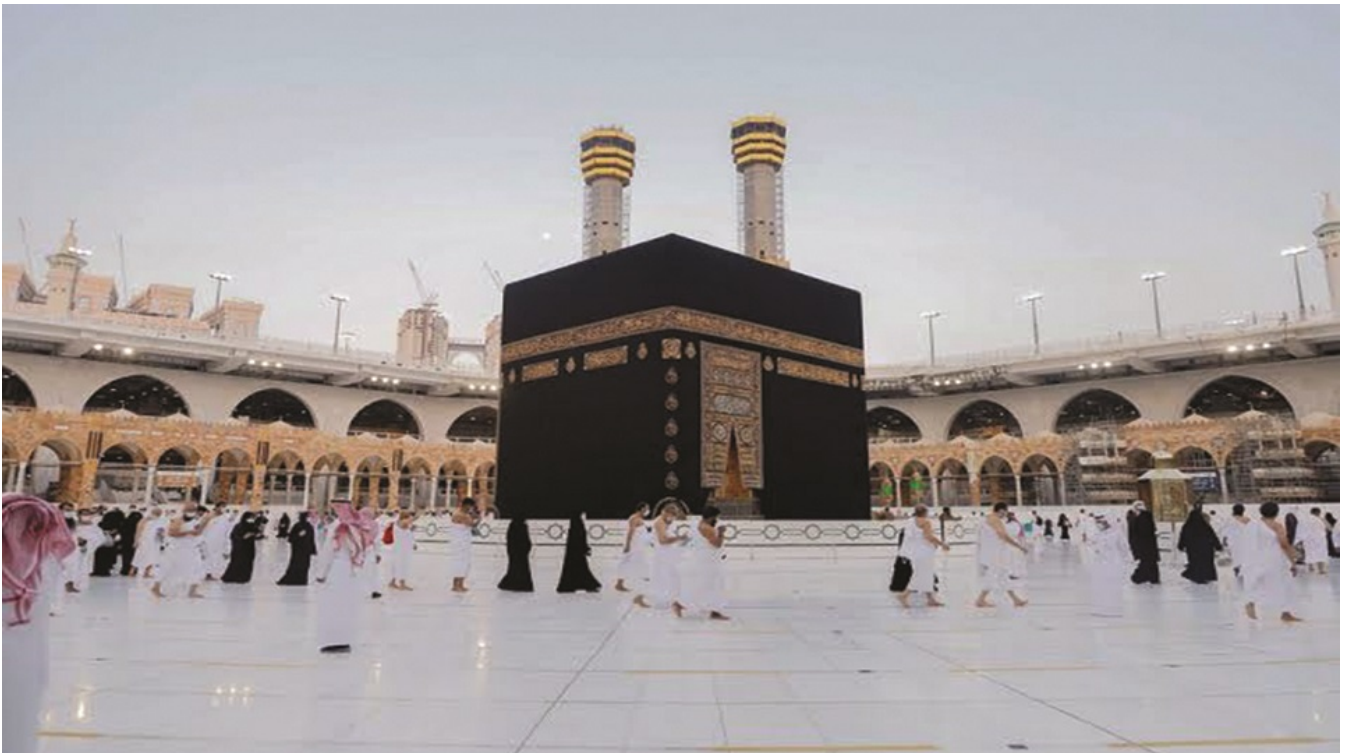


Biometric data must for Bangladeshi pilgrims to get Umrah e-visa

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Pilgrims from Bangladesh will have to provide their biometric data, including "fingerprints", to the Saudi authorities to get Umrah e-visas from now onwards.

Four other countries - the UK, Tunisia, Kuwait and Malaysia -will also have to do the same, according to reports citing an announcement by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

Pilgrims will have to use the Saudi Visa Bio app that allows visa registration via fingerprints and selfie biometrics.

The new app delivers on a commitment made by the Saudi government in late 2021 to allow biometrics enrollment through mobile devices so pilgrims to Makkah can avoid visiting visa centres in person, making the country one of the first in the world to accept biometrics by mobile for visa issuance, reports added.

In February 2022, the kingdom also released an electronic passport with a chip that stores the user's biometrics for authentication purposes.

M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, President of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), said as per reports that the new system will create problems and sufferings for the elderly pilgrims as their fingerprints, in many cases, do not match with the biometric data stored in the machine.

"But we will certainly follow the rules set by the Saudi Arabian authorities once they come into effect," he mentioned.

The HAAB President also noted, around 3-4 lac Bangladeshis perform Umrah every year.

Umrah is a major pilgrimage for Muslims. Millions from around visit Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage purposes.

Several Bangladeshis visit Saudi Arabia for this purpose.