

Union Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju chairs Haj Review Meeting; reviews conduct of Haj-2026 and lays down roadmap for Haj-2027

Indian Haj Mission conferred two Labbaytum Awards for the first time for excellence in Haj coordination and communication

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The Ministry of Minority Affairs convened the Haj Review Meeting on 18 June 2026 at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi, under the chairpersonship of Shri Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, to review the conduct of Haj-2026 and to deliberate upon the roadmap for Haj-2027.



Dr. Srivatsa Krishna, Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs; Ms. Sripriya Ranganathan, Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs; senior officials from the Ministries of Minority Affairs, External Affairs, Civil Aviation, Health & Family Welfare and Home Affairs; and representatives of the Haj Committee of India, BISAG-N and other stakeholders participated in the deliberations.

The Union Minister expressed satisfaction over the successful conduct of Haj-2026, during which approximately 1.75 lakh Indian Haj pilgrims performed Haj and credited it to the dedicated and coordinated efforts of all the Ministries and departments concerned, the Haj Committee of India, the State

Haj Committees, the Indian Haj Mission in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi authorities, whose collective contribution ensured a smooth, safe and dignified pilgrimage.



In a historic first, the Indian Haj Mission was conferred two Labbaytum Awards by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah under the “Best Haj Coordination and Communication” category, presented at the Khitamahu Misk ceremony marking the conclusion of the Haj season. The award recognises the seamless facilitation and welfare of Indian pilgrims during Haj-2026 and underscores India’s sustained commitment to excellence in pilgrim service.

Haj-2026 saw the introduction of several pilgrim-centric measures. Sofa-cum-beds were provided in Mina, enhancing comfort during the most demanding days of Haj; 62,500 pilgrims travelled from Makkah to Madinah by high-speed railway, considerably shortening the journey; and hotel-style accommodation in Makkah and a 20-day Short Haj Package were introduced, the package being availed by about 10,500 pilgrims, mainly working professionals.

Technology-driven reforms further enhanced transparency, safety and service delivery, including integration with the Saudi Nusuk platform, online flight booking and a strengthened digital grievance redressal mechanism. All Indian pilgrims in Madinah were accommodated in the Markazia area, ensuring better accessibility and convenience.



Despite the prevailing geopolitical situation in the region, the operation was conducted through 400 flights, supported by extensive transportation, comprehensive medical facilities, deployment of medical and administrative teams—including a dedicated medical team in the Mina camps—and round-the-clock assistance by the Indian Haj Mission.

The meeting also reviewed an emerging role of artificial intelligence (AI) interventions to strengthen end-to-end Haj pilgrim management, including a 24×7 multilingual voice-based support system in Hindi, Urdu and major regional languages, AI-assisted applications and documents verification, demand modelling for flight allocation across embarkation points, and real-time grievance tracking and escalation. These are envisaged for phased implementation, in line with the Government's push towards a technology-enabled Haj.

Reviewing the road ahead, the Union Minister directed all concerned Ministries, agencies, the Haj Committee of India and other stakeholders to commence preparations for Haj-2027 on priority, covering quota allocation, eligibility and health requirements, air arrangements, accommodation, transportation, Mina facilities, medical preparedness and the wider adoption of technology. He underlined that sustained coordination with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, in adherence to the prescribed timelines, will be central to its success—ensuring enhanced comfort, safety and health for every pilgrim—and will culminate in the signing of the bilateral agreement on Haj-2027 between India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 7 November 2026.

The Minister further indicated that Haj Policy-2027 would be announced shortly, following which the Haj Committee of India would invite applications from prospective pilgrims, enabling an early start to the application process.

He reiterated the Government of India's commitment to ensuring a safe, comfortable, transparent and dignified Haj for every Indian pilgrim.

AK/MR

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