



Hajj Pilgrimage

Why in News?

The ministry of Minority Affairs has **announced a new Haj policy** under which the application forms have been made available for free and the package cost per pilgrim has been reduced by Rs 50,000.

- The reduction of Rs 50,000 comes primarily in the form of relaxation of norms for foreign currency – **earlier a Haj pilgrim had to submit the equivalent of 2,100 Saudi Riyal**, amounting to approximately Rs 44,000, that was submitted to the Haj Committee for foreign exchange.

What is Hajj Pilgrimage?

- The Hajj is a religious [pilgrimage](#) to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia that is **mandatory for all able-bodied Muslims** who can afford it. It is **one of the Five Pillars of Islam** and is considered a central part of Muslim religious life.
 - **Five Pillars:**
 - **Shahada (Faith):** The declaration of faith in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet.
 - **Salah (Prayer):** Performing the five daily prayers facing the Kaaba in Mecca.
 - **Zakat (Charity):** Giving a portion of one's wealth to those in need.
 - **Sawm (Fasting):** Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
 - **Hajj (Pilgrimage):** Making a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one is physically and financially able.
- The Hajj takes place during the **Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah and involves several rituals.**
 - Dhu al-Hijjah is the **twelfth and final month of the Islamic calendar**. It is considered one of the most sacred months in the Islamic year and is seen as a **time of renewal, spiritual growth, and reflection, and is considered an important time to strive for greater closeness** with God.
- Participating in the Hajj is seen as a **way to demonstrate one's devotion to God and to earn spiritual merit**, and it is a source of great pride and inspiration for many Muslims.

How is Hajj Pilgrimage Promoted by India?

- **Ministry of Minority Affairs** is the **nodal ministry** to conduct Haj pilgrimage in India.
- Haj pilgrimage for the Indian Pilgrims is conducted either through Haj Committee of India (HCoI), which is a statutory organization under the administrative control of Ministry of Minority Affairs or through the **Haj Group Organisers (HGOs) dully approved by Ministry**.
- Also, the Hajj pilgrimage is promoted by various **religious organizations, Islamic cultural centers**, and other government agencies.
- India signed the Haj 2023 bilateral agreement with Saudi Arabia. According to the agreement, a total of 1,75,025 Indian Haj pilgrims will be able to perform Haj, reportedly the highest in history.

[Source: IE](#)

