



Haj Pilgrims

Why in News?

The **first batch** of [Haj pilgrims](#) from **Jammu and Kashmir** flew out of Sheikh-ul-Alam International Airport, Srinagar.

Key Points

- **Pilgrim Statistics:**
 - Around 3,622 pilgrims from Jammu & Kashmir will perform the **Haj pilgrimage** this year.
 - The first batch comprised 178 pilgrims who boarded a **direct flight to Saudi Arabia**.
- **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.

State PCS Course

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Haj pilgrimage for the Indian Pilgrims

- 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)** duly approved by Ministry.
 - The **Ministry of Minority Affairs is the nodal ministry** to conduct Haj pilgrimage in India.
- The **Haj Committee of India (HCI)** was established in 2002 under the **Haj Committee Act, 2002**.
 - All aspects of the arrangements for the HCI pilgrims in Saudi Arabia are coordinated by the **Consulate General of India (CGI), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.
- 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.



