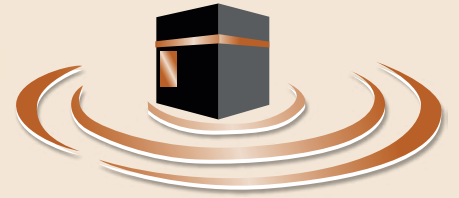


# Al-Ahella



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**King Salman  
unveils largest-ever**

**King Salman urges GCC to  
strengthen stability, stand united**

**In his address to Shoura, Monarch assures security  
to all, resolve to serve the Two Holy Mosques**





يتقدم رئيس ونائباً وأعضاء مجلس إدارة مؤسسة مطوفي حجاج دول جنوب آسيا  
ورؤساء مكاتب الخدمة الميدانية ومطوفو ومطوفات المؤسسة وكافة منسوبيها

بخالص التهاني وأصدق التبريكات

إلى مهالي وزير الحج والعمرة  
الدكتور محمد صالح بن طاهر بنتن

وذلك بمناسبة

تجديد الثقة به وزيراً للحج والعمرة



مؤسسة مطوفي حجاج جنوب آسيا



## A prosperous era and sustainable development

***D*uring the last few weeks, our country has witnessed many national events and made great cultural achievements.**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, visited many areas of the Kingdom including Qassim, Hail, Tabuk, Jouf and the northern borders between Safar 28 – 30, 1440 H (November 06-08, 2018) and Rabi Al-Awwal 11 – 13, 1440 H (November 19 – 21, 2018) to know the welfare of his people, perceive their needs, to oversee the progress of mega projects, and also to inaugurate various developmental projects in those areas, which cost the state over SR50 billion.

On the other hand, the Saudis celebrated on Rabi Al-Awwal 04, 1440H (November 12, 2018) the fourth anniversary of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman's accession to the throne. My Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Saudi citizens also renewed their commitment to be loyal to the beloved and caring King who has been keen to serve his people and his country.

On Rabi Al-Thani 11, 1440 H (December 18, 2018) the citizens rejoiced when the largest-ever budget of SR1.106 trillion in Kingdom's history was announced. The Council of Ministers' session was chaired by King Salman Bin Abdulaziz. The largest-ever budget aims to support economic growth, raise expenditure efficiency, and achieve financial stability and sustainability, in line with Vision 2030 through diversifying sources of revenue and by establishing mega projects in the areas like tourism, renewable energy, mining and future technologies.

To complement the continuous development of the Kingdom, royal decrees were issued on Rabi Al-Thani 20, 1440 H (December 27, 2018), to reshuffle the Council of Ministers; restructure the Council of Political and Security Affairs, Political and Security Affairs Council, and the Council of Economic Affairs and Development under the chairmanship of HRH Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. HRH Prince Badr Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz was appointed as Deputy Emir of Makkah Region, and HRH Prince Abdullah Bin Bandar Bin Abdul Aziz, was named Minister of the National Guard.

In recognition of the size and magnitude of the

responsibilities entrusted to our Establishment - Mutawiffy Hujjaj South Asia Establishment - especially at this stage when the Kingdom is witnessing a rapid development, the establishment has committed itself to exert the utmost efforts to achieve the goals of Vision 2030, by offering quality services to the pilgrims. We renew our pledge and loyalty to King Salman and HRH Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman.

Our wise leadership has been keen to serve the pilgrims and provide them every comfort to perform their rituals in comfort. To achieve this objective improvements in the system have been made, including the establishment of the Royal Commission of Makkah and Holy Sites under the chairmanship of the Crown Prince.

It is worth mentioning that since the departure of the pilgrims to their country, and from the beginning of 1440 H our Establishment has been holding continuous meetings to study and analyze the reports of various committees to assess the achievements and successes in the Hajj season in 1439H. This is with a view to improve our services to the pilgrims in the upcoming Hajj season of 1440 H, and avoid any shortcomings.

The Board of Directors of the Establishment is currently working on making all preparations for the Hajj season this year. It has been welcoming Hajj delegations from different countries to conclude the primary service contracts for their respective pilgrims. It is also preparing operational plans and the formation of field service offices in a manner that reflects the keenness and interest of our wise leadership to serve the pilgrims.

In our efforts to serve the pilgrims we receive guidance from HRH Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Governor of Makkah Region and Chairman of the Central Hajj Committee; HRH Prince Badr Bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of Makkah Region and Deputy Chairman of the Central Hajj Committee; HE Dr. Mohammad Saleh Bin Taher Benteen, Minister of Hajj and Umrah; Deputy Minister for Hajj and Umrah Dr. Abdul Fattah Bin Sulaiman Mashat, and ministry officials.

I ask Allah to bless us all with His grace, protect our country, our wise leadership.



**Dr. Ra'fat Ismail Badr**

Chairman of The Board of Directors  
South Asia Pilgrims  
Mutawiffy Establishment



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## In his address to Shoura, Monarch assures security to all, resolve to serve the Two Holy Mosques

**T**he Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, while inaugurating the third year of Shoura Council's seventh session on November 19, 2018 confirmed that the Kingdom has harnessed all possibilities to protect the security of the state and society and serve the two holy mosques, adding: "We seek to apply the religion of moderation, as it was the way of our pious predecessors, and we will face down all those who call for extremism or exaggeration in religion."

Riyadh - "Al-Ahella"

In his speech, the king pointed out that economic reforms depend on equitable redistribution of resources, and "Vision 2030" aims to provide decent livelihoods in line with a domestic policy based on diversifying sources of income and raising the productivity of society. "The circumstances we are

currently undergoing will be overcome in the future.”

On international matters, he said: “We support any political solution to international crises to allow development efforts, whether related to Yemen’s security or the Kingdom’s security. We will not accept any interference in Yemen from any party, and we will continue to cooperate with the international community to achieve world peace.” The session was also attended by His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, at the council’s headquarters in Riyadh.

**Al-Sheikh welcomes Monarch**

HE Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Bin Muhammad Al-Sheikh, Chairman of the Shoura Council, in his speech welcoming the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and HRH Crown Prince and the audience, said: “Welcome to the Shoura Council on a day of joy and happiness, in which the Council attends the Royal announcement at the beginning of the year. A new Shoura, commences in its third year of the seventh session, proceeding on established principles for the betterment of our dear country.” He added: “This



blessed country, may Allah grant it long life, gives thanks to Allah Almighty and then thanks your wise leadership. This period of our history has seen great strides and ambitious plans, all aimed at our nation’s advancement, and the achievement of a more dignified life for our citizens. These feelings of joy and pleasure felt by our citizenry are a result of the success achieved by the economic programs. These programs are aimed at raising the national economic performance, diversifying income, opening fields of employment for nationals, and privatizing many commercial and economic activities. Our country has become the focus of global economists and investors and is an active member of the G20.”

**King lays out the road map**

In his royal address, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques said:

“It is a pleasure to meet you today to review the internal and external policies of the state. Allah has blessed this country with the Islamic Sharia, which we adhere to in an approach and action, which guides us to strive for justice, to consolidate our efforts of moderation, and to disseminate the values of moderation and tolerance. The blessings of Allah have been showered down upon us all. Our country is honored to offer high level of quality services; Allah honored us to serve the Two Holy Mosques, and to serve the pilgrims of Hajj, Umrah and visitors. Our country will



continue its policies aimed at improving the services provided to them, raising them to the highest level.

The Saudi citizen is the main engine of development and its most effective tool. The young men and women of this country are the mainstay of achievement and hope of the future, and Saudi women are a full partner according to our tolerant law. We will continue our efforts – with Allah’s help - towards enhancing their participation in this blessed national development.

Social issues are our top priority. The government will continue to support the social services system and provide targeted support to needy groups, enabling them to be productive, embodying economic efficiency and liv-

ing dignified lives. We will support civil society institutions to play their important and active role in this matter.

Brothers and sisters,

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a developmental shift at all levels as a result of the plans and programs initiated by Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 and the unprecedented government spending attached to it. According to the latest periodic performance reports investigating programs related to Vision 2030, they are progressing at a satisfactory rate, with some of its achievements appearing on the ground as of now. We are determined - Allah willing - to move forward with the reforms process.

You all are aware of the government’s efforts to boost employment, training

and education opportunities for young men and women in the country, and we have directed the President of the Council of Economic Affairs and Development to focus on developing human resources, preparing the new generation for future jobs. Our country has witnessed the inauguration of promising economic sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, and mining, all of which will contribute to building a balanced labor market that takes into consideration the needs of the future and restructures itself with high efficiency in response to new variables.

One of our priorities in the next phase is to continue our support to the Saudi private sector and enable it as a partner in the ambitious economic growth journey, and to become one of the pioneers of investing in future technologies. These technologies - with the help of Allah – will become a new stream of income for both our national economy and the world economy.

We would like to draw attention here to the Kingdom’s fiscal policies, including balancing expenditure control and efficiency with support for economic growth.

In our visit to the various regions of the Kingdom, we





were keen to meet with our citizens and to observe the development projects being implemented. We have directed the Crown Prince and the concerned ministers to monitor each region's needs, its development priorities, and to concentrate efforts on projects that directly affect and enable our citizens to accelerate their achievements. They should raise any issues needing necessary action from us, and continuously follow up on the improvement of all services provided to citizens, foremost of which are educational and health services.

Distinguished Council,

Our brave soldiers carry out their patriotic duty to the fullest and provide the finest examples of sacrifices and courage in defending the faith and the nation.

Our martyrs ر- Allah's shower them with mercy – are in our memories and their families will continue to be under our care and attention. We will continue our military development programs, including the promotion of the programs for the military industrial advancement and its necessary technologies at an accelerated pace.

The Kingdom will continue to confront extremism and terrorism and stand firmly before any group that tries to

harm our religion and we will continue to play our part in the leadership and development of the region, thereby increasing the opportunities for regional and international investment.

### **Palestinian issue – a priority**

The Kingdom will continue its efforts to address the crises in the region and resolve its issues, foremost among which is the Palestinian question. At the 29th Arab League Summit, which we called the Jerusalem Summit, we affirmed that the Palestinian issue is our priority and will remain so until the brotherly Palestinian people receive all their legitimate rights, foremost among which is the establishment of an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Kingdom's assistance over the past two years to the brotherly Palestinian people has exceeded \$500 million.

The Kingdom has repeatedly affirmed that the stand by the brotherly Yemeni people has not been an option but a duty required by the Yemeni people to oppose the aggression of the Iranian-backed coup militias, and that the Kingdom reaffirms its continued support for the efforts of the UN Secretary General's special envoy for

Yemen to reach a political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution No. 2216, the Gulf initiative and its executive machinery, and the outcomes of the Yemeni national dialogue. We reiterate our rejection of the continued attempts by the Houthi militias to impose their will on the brotherly Yemeni people and to disrupt efforts to reach a political solution. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports and assists the brotherly Yemeni people, who have been assisted by the Kingdom's aid over the past two years in upwards of \$4 billion.

For almost four decades, the Iranian regime has intervened in the internal affairs of other states and has nurtured and supported the forces of terrorism in the region. These criminal acts, which violate the most basic rules of good neighbourliness and international covenants and norms, are added to the record of the Iranian regime, known for its chaos. Ruin has afflicted many countries in the region, and it is time for this chaos and for this ruin to stop. The international community must work to put an end to the Iranian nuclear and ballistic program, halt its destabilizing activities in the region, and cease its blatant interference in the internal affairs of other states.





With regard to the Syrian crisis, the Kingdom calls for an urgent political solution that will get Syria out of crisis, banish terrorist organizations and external influences, and allow the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland.

On the Iraqi issue, we applaud the blessed steps that have been achieved to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and cooperation between the two countries, looking forward to continued efforts to enhance the prospects of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

### Strategic partnership

This country of yours is keen to nurture its strategic partnerships with friendly countries based on mutual benefit and respect and will

work with its partners and friends from the world community to help lower-income countries and enable them to develop their economies. The kingdom has exempted a number of these developing countries of their outstanding debts in excess of \$6 billion.

In terms of oil markets, the Kingdom will continue to work constructively with other producers within and outside OPEC to keep the markets stable, thus protecting all the interests of producers and consumers alike.

Distinguished Council,

The Kingdom was founded on an Islamic approach based on the realization of right and the establishment of just foundations and values. We strive to care for

all our citizens, and we are proud of the blessed efforts of the judiciary and the public prosecutors, and we affirm that this country will never depart from the applying Allah's laws without discrimination; in this we will fear no retribution or blame.

The state is also keen to complete the development of the State apparatuses and institutions in order to ensure the proper enforcement of regulations and instructions and to avoid any irregularities or errors.

We thank the Shoura Council for its continuous efforts and hard work in carrying out its tasks, and we appreciate its contribution by publicizing the Kingdom's positions on various issues through dialogues, meetings with various international parliaments, and in the regional and international parliamentary forums. We hope that the efforts of the Council will be crowned with success.

In conclusion, we are all custodian, and are entrusted with discharging this trust in a manner pleasing to Allah. Before Him we are responsible first and foremost. We ask Allah to always make our work sincere, guide us all to deeds that please Him. Peace be upon you, Allah's mercy and His blessings.



# King Salman unveils largest-ever budget of SR1.106 trillion

**C**ustodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman chaired the meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al-Yamama Palace on December 18, 2018 and announced the country's general budget for the new fiscal year 1440/1441H.

Addressing the citizens, he said with the help of Allah we declare the budget for the fiscal year 1441AH (2019) as the largest budget in the history of the Kingdom, aimed at supporting the Kingdom's economic growth, raising spending efficiency, and achieving sustainability and financial stability, within the objectives of Vision 2030.

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Riyadh - Special

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**'This year's budget continues to raise public finance efficiency and promote economic stability and financial sustainability'  
- Crown Prince**

With God's help, we are determined to move forward on the path of economic reform and financial management, enhance transparency, empower private sector, and ensure that all services provided to citizens are distinguished.

The expenditure in this budget – SR1.106 trillion - is an increase of seven percent, more than expected to be disbursed by the end of fiscal year 2018, and the expected revenue is SR975 billion, an increase of nine percent more than expected by the end of 2018. This budget continues the government's policy of focusing on basic services for citizens and the development of government services.

"My first concern is to continue working towards comprehensive development in all regions of the Kingdom and in all areas, and your government is doing so with the help of God Almighty – depending on Him - ministers and of-



ficials have been directed to implement the budget related to all the programs and projects.

We ask Allah for help and success and we praise Him for the blessing of security, stability and development.

Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you.

**Steady progress**

HRH Crown Prince Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense, President of the Council for Economic Affairs and Development, stressed that the economic and structural reforms in the national economy are progressing steadily towards the achievement of the goals of Vision 2030. This vision is aimed at diversifying the

economy, achieving economic stability and financial sustainability, as well as stimulating the private sector and working to improve the living standards of citizens.

"This year's budget continues to raise the efficiency of public finance management, to promote economic stability and financial sustainability," he said in a press statement following the announcement of the, adding that financial stability is a key pillar of economic progress and growth, and the economic reforms and initiatives that have been implemented over the past two years have contributed directly to the reduction of budget deficits in 2016 (12.8%), 2017 (9.3%), and 2018 (4.6%) respectively, with a higher spending volume per annum.

# King Salman urges GCC to strengthen stability, stand united

**C**ustodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, along with his brothers the eminent leaders of the GCC delegations, concluded the 39th meeting for the GCC summit at the Diriya Palace on December 09, 2018.

Riyadh - Special

The summit in its closing resolution, titled “The Riyadh Declaration,” emphasized on the importance of the GCC tackling regional challenges, expressing unity as a regional goal among the leaders of the council as well as their unified agreement to contain terrorism and extremist ideologies.

The closing resolution pointed the importance of King Salman’s vision to strengthen stability and unity in the gulf states. The leaders attending the summit drew attention to the instructions they’ve given their governments to diligently follow all schedules making economic integration a reality.

The resolution also emphasized its support for the Palestinian cause and the GCC stand to help the Palestinian people, as well as their dedi-



cation to continued assistance to the Yemeni people and all friendly countries.

Earlier, the one-day GCC summit started with the participation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs of Oman Sayyid Fahd Bin Mahmoud Al-Said and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sultan Al-Muraikhi.

## A blessed journey

Dr Abdullatif Al-Zayani, Secretary General of the GCC, read out the Riyadh Declaration, ratified in the council’s 39th summit. The Declaration emphasized to all GCC leaders the importance that must be given to protecting the powers and privileges of the GCC, the unity among its members, in a manner that will preserve both the private and shared interests and agreements of all GCC countries, fortifying their Islamic beliefs, Arabic culture, and deep-rooted history. While traversing this historical journey together, they work towards the realization



of a united goal that gathers them and unites their children.

Al-Zayani continued, stating that the GCC leaders emphasize the importance of completing all necessary projects that would fulfill the vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, approved by the leaders at the Riyadh Summit in December 2015, and directed to take the necessary steps. The steps include:

- The creation of a road map that includes activation of necessary processes that will turn the vision into reality, unify GCC countries and lay the foundation that fortifies the GCC's relationships as well as those with the world community, all with the goal of bringing about more growth and prosperity for its citizens.
- Regarding economic development, the leaders issued instructions that the programs laid out being applied diligently. The comprehensive economic program ratified by the GCC should be applied in its entirety, and any and all impediments and difficulties in its application should be removed so as to prevent their application.
- With regards to unified defense, GCC leaders have detailed the creation of a unified military council, an important strategic decision



for their shared interests. The leaders instructed that all the necessary procedures for this unified military council be implemented and thus commence immediately. A GCC-wide research center for strategic and security studies should also be established, to bolster and support the unified military council strategically, educating future GCC military leaders to fulfill those goals.

- Regarding security concerns, GCC leadership emphasized the importance of the GCC in creating security and stability in the region as well as its role in fighting terrorist organizations through its unified security strategy and its ability to face down extremist ideologies.
- They stressed on extreme importance of a unified and active foreign policy for the GCC that is based upon its charter, working to preserve the benefits and the rights of GCC countries and allow it

to avoid both regional and international disputes. They emphasized their support for the Palestinian issue, their unity with the Palestinian people, as well as their investment in the continued assistance of the Yemeni people and all Arab countries in a manner that will grant those countries safety, security, and economic prosperity.

- The leaders instructed to accelerate the strategic connections among their countries that support economic cultural political and security cooperation as well as between the GCC, its sister countries, and international organizations.
- The leaders emphasized the important role played by each citizen in each GCC country, the employment sector, women, and private organizations; all of these help to preserve the GCC and its ongoing prosperity.



## Prince Khaled hails services to the pilgrims

**H**is Royal Highness Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Adviser to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Governor of the Makkah Region, & President of the Central Hajj Committee, thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz; His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, the Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, and His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz Bin Saud Bin Nayef, Minister of the Interior, Chairman of the Supreme Hajj Committee for the facilities that have been provided to the pilgrims, enabling them to perform their rituals with ease and tranquility.

Makkah - "Al-Ahella"

This came during an address at the Royal Diwan Prince Khaled had in Makkah on Au-

gust 29, 2018 at the meeting of the Central Hajj Committee to discuss the positive feedback

and critical observations about the Hajj Season in preparation for the next Hajj season.

At the beginning of the meeting, Prince Khaled congratulated the members of the Central Hajj Committee on the successes achieved, and appreciated the work provided by all stakeholders in providing comfort to the pilgrims, contributing to a positive image of the Kingdom to be related to the world.

He stressed that the success achieved will motivate further ef-



forts to achieve the utmost comfort for the guests of The Most Merciful. His expectation is to see even greater and more numerous successes as the holy sites are developed further with the aim of facilitating ease to the pilgrims.

The Governor thanked local and international media for their coverage of the last year's hajj season, and for their significant impact in conveying the true image of the Kingdom's leadership, government and people to the pilgrims, who all serve the pilgrims as a duty.

### The positives

The meeting of the Committee touched on the most notable positives that were observed during last year's hajj season, including the accolade earned for the 1439 Hajj season. Thanks to Allah SWT and then to the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for the material and human support in the service of pilgrims. An integral part of this was the high level of coordination between all stakeholders which enhanced performance among them; all of this under the direction and watchful eye of the Governor of Makkah Province and the diligent follow-up by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Bandar, Deputy Governor of Makkah Region who is also Deputy Chairman of the Central Hajj Committee.

Another positive was that implemented projects aimed at serving the pilgrims were com-



pleted in record time by the Makkah Development Authority in coordination with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

A third positive of last Hajj season was the low number of over-stayers which reflects positively on the services provided as well as the smooth movement of vehicles, pedestrians, crowds and low rates of squatting. The "Hajj is an act of worship and a civilized behavior" campaign played a significant role in raising the level of awareness among citizens and residents of the obligation to abide by Hajj instructions.

Among the positives that have been observed during Hajj was the absence of accidents, infectious and contagious diseases. Another positive was the the full availability of services such as water, electricity, and nutrition in Makkah and Holy Precincts and the lack of complaints regarding these things. The current Hajj season was also marked by the smooth transport of pilgrims

and the providing of security for them. Thanks are due to Allah and then to the efforts of the security forces. The comprehensiveness of all the Mina camps equipped with new, advanced air conditioning, the readiness of pilgrim accommodations in the holy precincts, and the successful completion of emergency preparation exercises are all net positives of last season as well.

Among the positives that have been observed during last Hajj was the absence of accidents; infectious and contagious diseases; availability of services such as water, electricity, and nutrition in Makkah and the holy sites and the lack of complaints regarding these facilities. The Hajj season was also marked by the smooth transport of pilgrims and the providing of security for them. Thanks are due to Allah and then to the efforts of the security forces. The comprehensiveness of all the camps Mina equipped with new, advanced

air conditioning, the readiness of pilgrim accommodations in the holy sites, and the successful completion of emergency preparation exercises are expected positives of this season's as well.

The positives also included the development and construction of patient isolation rooms in hospitals in the holy sites, providing health services to more than 330 thousand pilgrims in Makkah and other holy sites, the development of crowd control mechanisms for pilgrims and the low level of traffic irregularities as well as the timely, regular operation of train trips.

**Makkah Road Initiative**

The numbers of civil defence volunteers increased from 813 to 1,485, and this season witnessed the implementation of the Makkah Road Initiative, which contributed to more than 100,000 pilgrims from Indonesia & Malaysia completing pre-clearance of immigration at their respective points of embarkation. Technical procedures to accelerate the entry of pilgrims were updated, and support for women's passport services were advanced with 143 additional female officers, and 184 additional passport counters in Jeddah pilgrimage halls.

The positives in the area of travel procedure included reduced reception procedures at King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah, the development of a unified electronic system for



pilgrims from abroad; addition of escalators to reach the pilgrims camps on the side of the mountains; use of pre-prepared meals; development of seasonal baby incubators; increased opportunities for those wishing to volunteer during the Hajj season; use of the entirety of the piazza surrounding the Holy Ka'aba for the purpose of Tawaf; crowd direction of the pilgrims from the Jamarat to the Masjid Al-Haram in a smooth, systematic manner, resulting in a smooth Tawaf; the expanded use of all free space in the Masjid Al-Haram, and opening of the northern tunnels which distributed the pilgrims better.

Some other positives were the limitation of airport arrival reception to 45,000 pilgrims a day; the commitment of all government agencies to work at the airport to implement unified operational plans as one team; the shading of pedestrian corridors

which contributed to reducing stress, and providing dedicated medical teams to transport the pilgrims to complete their Hajj rituals.

Other positives were the increased availability of foodstuff and supplies and an increase in seizures of consumer goods in violation of code by 30 percent over the previous year; increased efficiency of the cleaning crews; and the decrease of plastic waste resulting from drinking bottles, as well as better distribution of cold water dispensers. Sprinklers installed in the holy sites and the Masjid Al-Haram resulted in an overall decrease in temperature and created a more pleasant climate, and an increase in water supplies to 912 thousand m3 at peak time. Last but not the least positive was the testing of family-style units with bathrooms in Mina for more than 70,000 pilgrims.





## Ministry signs MoUs with SAP, Cisco

**T**he Ministry of Hajj and Umrah signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with several leading technology companies to promote a digital and cloud computing infrastructure. These MoUs are part of a framework to investment to benefit from means and methods available in pilgrim services. They were executed as part of a public investment under the “Invest in Saudi Arabia” initiative. The initiative, part of the Vision 2030 national transformation program, promotes awareness of increased investment opportunity in the Kingdom for local, regional, and international investors.

Riyadh - “Al-Ahella”

HE Dr. Mohammad Bin Taher Benteen, the Minister of Hajj and Umrah, signed the first MoU with German company SAP to

develop innovative cloud computing technologies to support required operations. SAP was represented by Steve Tzakakis, SVP and GM South Europe, Middle East & Africa. Dr. Benteen signed the second MoU with Salman Faqeeh, Managing Director, Cisco Saudi Arabia, with the aim of strengthening the Hajj and Umrah ministry’s technology infrastructure and digital services.

This new approach, using cloud computing services, will lead towards an overall reduction in government technology costs around 25 to 50 percent, due to the flexibility inherent in this new technology.

By signing these MoUs, the Hajj and Umrah ministry seeks to transform its processed delivery systems and to develop e-work structures specific to Hajj and umrah services which will allow it the speed and flexibility necessary to achieve excellence in both service delivery as well as information access. The

best standards of technical and security implementation applied through this domain will use a digital cloud platform to allow the standardization of all data related to the Hajj through SAP technology, and in cooperation with various travel agencies throughout the world the Ministry will be able to provide instant access to all statistics related to the pilgrims’ travel experience. This will improve crowd management, transport, and service logistics, ensuring health and safety for all pilgrims at all the times.

### Part of Vision 2030

Dr. Benteen said: “This digital transformation is in line with Vision 2030 and will allow pilgrims to enjoy their journey in peace and tranquility. It will also allow for the number of pilgrims to steadily grow while we constantly improve cloud services; in turn this will help to improve the overall effectiveness of our infrastructure, improve every pilgrim’s travel experience.”