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Royal condolences sent



Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman conveyed condolences of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE vice president, prime minister and ruler of Dubai, on the death of his son Sheikh Rashid bin Mohammed. Sheikh Mohammed expressed thanks to King Salman and the deputy crown prince for their noble feelings. (SPA)

2M PILGRIMS ARRIVE IN MINA

SIRAJ WAHAB
ARAB NEWS STAFF

MINA: Two million Muslims from around the world arrived in the Mina valley outside the holy city of Makkah. They came by bus, car or on foot to camp in the tent city for Yaum Al-Tarwiya on Tuesday's first leg of the annual Haj pilgrimage.

The weather conditions were particularly harsh in the day but Hajis were pleasantly surprised by light showers after Maghreb. They stayed inside their tents beseeching Allah and reciting the Holy Qur'an.

The pilgrims came chanting, "Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik" (Here I am, Allah, answering Your call). They will spend the night in 50,000 tents, in preparation for Wednesday's standing in prayer on



SUBMISSION TO GOD: Hajis offer combined prayer of Dohr and Asr at Al-Khaif Mosque in Mina. (AN photo by Ahmed Hashad)

Mount Arafat which is the climax of the five-day ritual.

Thanks to massive safety and security arrangements, the 8-km trek by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from Makkah to Mina, an uninhabited valley enclosed by arid mountains, was free of incident.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Naif, who is chairman of the Supreme Haj Committee, congratulated Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman on the successful arrival in the Kingdom of 1.38 million pilgrims from 164 nations. The number of

Haj pilgrims is fewer than last year by 5,439.

In a message addressed to King Salman, the crown prince said: "I am honored on this blessed day to express my warmest greetings and congratulations to you on the successful and safe arrival of pilgrims by air, land

and sea for Haj 2015. They have arrived in the holy land in peace and security, thanks to Allah Almighty and your continuing care for all services to them which create the means of comfort and enable them to perform their Haj rituals easily and safely."

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Punishment fear: No takers for illegal Hajis

SIRAJ WAHAB
ARAB NEWS STAFF

MINA: For pilgrims, Haj is a once in a lifetime journey. They are focussed completely on the pilgrimage with its many daunting and moving rituals. On the other hand, for some enterprising young Saudis, Haj is a chance to serve the pilgrims, earn their blessings and also to make some extra money.

For these young Saudis, Haj is a time to get behind the wheel and make extra money by ferrying pilgrims to and from the holy sites. Many of them use their own private cars while others



CAUTIOUS: Jeddah-based taxi driver Mohammed Al-Amri takes no chances.

choose rented cars. Whatever they decide, things have not been easy this year because of the tough rules that have been put in place.

"In the past, the authorities weren't as strict as they are these days," said Mohammed Al-Amri, a 41-year-old Saudi from Jeddah. "Ferrying pilgrims from Jeddah used to be hassle-free. It is still profitable, but no longer hassle-free."

Al-Amri was obviously referring to the authorities who clamped down on undocumented pilgrims. "Drivers who are caught with undocumented pilgrims face six months in jail and thousands of riyals in fines," he said. "Nobody wants to take chances because of the penalties. Whatever you earn can vanish in an instant if you are found with undocumented pilgrims in your car."

Continued on Page 2

SHORTtakes

Houthis seize soldiers

● **RIYADH:** Two Saudi soldiers have gone missing after they lost their way in Yemen, said Brig-Gen. Ahmed Al-Assiri, spokesman of the coalition, on Tuesday. "However, evidence suggests they are alive and detained by the Houthis, Al-Assiri said. He asked the Houthis to respect the Geneva Convention and not use the soldiers' images in the media. He said the coalition holds the militia responsible for the safety of the soldiers' lives. Al-Assiri assured the families of the soldiers that the alliance is doing its best to bring home the soldiers as soon as possible."

New kiswa for Kaaba

● **MAKKAH:** The Holy Kaaba will be covered with a new kiswa (cover) on Wednesday after Fajr in the presence of top religious figures. The ceremony, which will continue until Asr prayer, will be broadcast live on www.gph.gov.sa. Over 240 people are involved in the manufacturing process, using the largest sewing

machine whose length is 16 meters. The cost of manufacturing a kiswa is estimated at SR22 million annually, including the cost of material and employees' pay. Nearly 700 kg of silk and 120 kg of gold and silver threads are used in its production.

Manslaughter charges

● **JEDDAH:** The five girls who caused a deadly fire while playing in school that resulted in the deaths of three teachers five years ago face manslaughter charges. The Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution has referred the case to a Jeddah court. The girls have admitted causing the fire on Nov. 19, 2011 that also left 48 people injured. The prosecutor read out the charges to the girls in the presence of their parents. Investigation results showed the fire was started in the basement by a matchbox that a girl brought to school. The lit match was placed in a plastic cup next to the fire alarm to set it off. There was no criminal intention.

— ARAB NEWS

Crane disaster: 10 bodies yet to be identified; 2 more found

ARAB NEWS

MAKKAH: Ten bodies of those who died in the crane tragedy at Makkah's Grand Mosque have yet to be identified.

Al-Madinah daily, citing sources, said that the number of fatalities is 109. Among them, 92 have been identified and of them, 89 have been released for the last rites; three are yet to be handed over. Eight bodies are in pieces.

Indians comprised the largest number of casualties with 13, followed by 12 Pakistanis, it said.

Among the identified bodies, 24 are women and 68 men.

Meanwhile, the Civil Defense in Makkah recovered two more bodies from under the rubble of the crashed crane.

Brig. Abdullah Al-Harthi, Civil Defense spokesman, announced on Monday that his teams found the two bodies after dismantling parts of the crane to remove it from the site.



TRAGIC: The crane tragedy shook the Muslim world.

"The two martyrs are Malaysian, putting the total number of the dead at this moment at 109," he said.

He added: "We faced some challenges in identifying some bodies because they were in pieces. We used thumb impressions to identify them."

There is a possibility that more bodies are lying under the crane debris.



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