

Saudi Arabia: Haj Declared Free of Infectious Diseases

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Jeddah - This year's Haj has been declared free of any infectious diseases. Health Minister Hamad Al Manie said in the holy city of Makkah on Wednesday that there was no report of outbreak of any infectious disease during the pilgrimage.

Al Manie told a press conference that reports from field surveillance and follow-up activities showed that there was no outbreak of any infectious disease at the holy sites during the Haj.

According to Khaled Mirghalani, ministry spokesman, the prevention of infectious and communicable diseases would not have been possible without the efforts of Saudi diplomatic missions abroad that strictly implemented health requirements of pilgrims by working with health authorities in the countries where they are based.

"The Saudi missions abroad ensured that meningitis shots are taken by pilgrims and the requirement of flu vaccines was also met where necessary," he said.

He said that the government had put enormous resources at the disposal of the authorities to provide health care services during this Haj. Around 10,000 health care workers were mobilised this year to serve pilgrims at 24 hospitals and 188 primary health care centres.

He said that Al Manie discussed with Makkah Governor Prince Khaled Al Faisal preparations for the opening of King Abdullah Medical City (KAMC) in Makkah, scheduled for the middle of 2009.

The KAMC, which will have 1,500 beds at three hospitals covering an area of 250,000 square metres, is expected to begin services in the second half of next year.

There will be a new 500-bed specialist hospital; a 500-bed maternity and children hospital; and the 500-bed Al Noor hospital that still exists and which will be part of the new city. The hospitals would be instrumental in treating pilgrims at the holy city.

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