

NOTICE

Reference is invited to this ministry's circular no. Haj-15/5/2024-Haj-MoMA dated 29.11.2024 vide which the list of eligible HGOs was intimated. Subsequently, the HGO portal was made live for Stage 2 registrations from 04.12.2024.

2. New Saudi guidelines were introduced for Haj 2025, restricting Private entities with a quota of 2000 or more to be considered eligible. To meet the Saudi requirements, a new concept of Combined Haj Group Organisers (CHGOs) was introduced in the HGO Policy for Haj-2025. Further, despite prolonged litigation on the matter by certain HGOs, the Ministry was able to finalise the constitution of 26 CHGOs with a minimum of 2000 quota each in December, 2024.
3. As all HGOs are aware, the role of the Ministry w.r.t. HGOs is limited to issuing of eligibility certificate/allocation of quota, based on the directions received every year from the Saudi Govt. before start of Haj. Thereafter, the CHGOs/HGOs are required to directly enter into the commercial arrangements/ make payments to the Saudi Government on the Saudi Haj portal directly. The CHGOs/HGOs must finalise the zones/camps, accommodation and transport contracts on their own as has been the past practice, which includes complying with the Saudi guidelines, timelines and procedures. A new '*Nusuk Masar*' portal was launched this year by the Saudi Govt. for directly dealing with the queries of the Private entities, upload their contracts and make payments, through their respective logins.
4. The issue of finalisation of zones/camps for the entire quota of India, including for CHGOs was insisted upon by the Saudi authorities. Though selection of zones/camps and payment for the zones/camps was the responsibility of the HGOs, Govt. of India, taking into account the shortage of time available, as a special dispensation directed the Haj Committee of India (HCoI) to credit the wallets of CHGOs who opt for the same, to enable them to finalise their Zones/Camps at Mina, subject to a nominal service charge being payable by the CHGOs.
5. CHGOs were required to opt for payment through HCoI for booking zones/camps on their behalf vide notice dated 19.12.2024 and repay the HCoI within four weeks or pay the amounts due for various contracts directly to the Saudi Govt. on their own. Vide Ministry's Notice Haj-22/21/2023-Haj-MoMA (pt.1)(e-140701) dated 02.01.2025, the payment portal of HCoI was notified for CHGOs to enable crediting of their e-wallets in Saudi Arabia for conducting their financial transactions in Saudi Arabia. Since there was no response from CHGOs, a reminder notice dated 07.02.2025 to remit amounts for finalisation of service arrangements for their respective pilgrims in Saudi Arabia as per Saudi guidelines applicable including HCoI's dues, was issued. On 21.02.2025, it was once again written to CHGOs to repay HCoI for payments of zones carried out on their behalf latest by 10.03.2025. In compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's directions, all HGOs were also advised to pay their dues to the respective CHGOs, to enable them to make the payments on their behalf, to the Saudi Govt. failing which the CHGOs were allowed to transfer the quota of HGOs not making payments to the waitlisted HGOs.
6. The CHGOs in the meantime intimated the Ministry that they were unable to credit payments directly to the Saudi Govt on its *Nusuk* portal. The account numbers of all CHGOs were also collected and handed over to the Saudi Govt. through the Ministry of External

Affairs. The matter relating to inability by CHGOs to make direct remittance on *Nusuk* portal was taken up at various levels including through diplomatic channels by issue of a Note Verbale by CGI Jeddah dated 07.03.2024. A series of meetings were also held in this regard at various senior levels, including by CGI, Jeddah with the Saudi Govt., to resolve the issue. During the second week of March, 2025, on account of CHGOs not paying the Saudi Govt. for their service contracts as per Saudi timelines for Haj-2025, the Saudis took an unprecedented step of cancelling the Zone-1 and 2 allotments of CHGOs. Subsequently, all functionalities of the CHGOs being able to contract and make payments w.r.t. their service arrangements, accommodation, and transport/logistics were disabled by the Saudis on the *Nusuk* portal.

7. To resolve the emergent situation, and since the entire quota of the HGOs was at stake, the Ministry conveyed to the CHGOs the urgency to deposit and remit the requisite amounts for the service provider, accommodation and logistics/transport contracts to the HCol account to strengthen India's negotiating position with the Saudis on the matter.

8. The Ministry has been working in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs in seeking suitable resolution on the matter, on behalf of the all the CHGOs/HGOs, with the Saudi Govt. and the matter has been taken up at the highest levels within the two Ministries. Secretary (MA) and Ambassador of India, held a meeting with the Saudi Vice Minister of Hajj and Umrah, at Jeddah and as a special gesture, India's quota of 10,000 private pilgrims out of the total was restored. The online portal for registration was also promised to be opened by the Saudi Govt. for a short period as conveyed, during which all CHGOs must complete the formalities without any delay.

9. The HGOs are also advised to be ready with the documentation and contracts at short notice, in case any additional quota is allotted by the Saudi Govt.

10. In view of the above circumstances, the consequent unprecedented and unanticipated situation arising out of the same and with the intention to strike a balance between the business interests of the HGOs and the pilgrims, who have already booked their seats with the HGOs, the following is hereby decided:

- (i) The status quo of qualified HGOs (in all categories as per HGO policy for Haj-2025) will be maintained during Haj-2026. They would be eligible for the same quota for Haj-2026 subject to sufficient quota being provided by Saudi Arabia for Haj-2026. In compliance with Hon'ble Supreme Court's decision in *M/s Kolkata Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd. And Ors Vs Union of India*, the quota actually made available would be adjusted on a pro-rata basis, to accommodate all HGOs including the waitlisted HGOs of Haj-2025, in the various CHGOs where they are members.
- (ii) The Saudi authorities have advanced/preponed the timelines for payment for zones/camps and contracts, and have been insisting on strict adherence to the timelines for all contracts and payments. Non compliance with the timelines has led to the entire quota of the HGOs being jeopardized during Haj 2025. To ensure a smooth Haj-2026, and avoid a repeat of the situation in Haj 2026, advance payment would be sought from all CHGOs/HGOs based on the Zone and Category of Service selected by them. The payment will be required to be remitted by all HGOs to the wallet of the concerned CHGO to avoid the unprecedented situation as faced during Haj-2025 wherein the zones/camps were cancelled due to non-payment of zones/camps and service contracts by the CHGOs and non-payment of dues by HGOs to the CHGOs.
- (iii) The funds of HCol were used during Haj-2025 for securing zones/camps for the CHGOs (reimbursable with a service charge) as a special one time case, in view of the unprecedented circumstance of the Saudis making the zone/camp allotment for HCol's quota conditional to the securing of camps/zones for CHGOs at the same time. It may be noted that HCol's funds shall not be utilised for securing camps of CHGOs during Haj-2026 and all CHGOs/HGOs must make advance preparation for deposit of payments, much ahead of Haj 2026, on the same lines as is carried out by HCol for its pilgrims.

- (iv) All HGOs shall have to adjust their business model going forward and be ready with advance payments and make packages for Haj-2026 well in advance. The process of soliciting customers shall also have to start immediately after announcement of Haj-2026 Policy by the Saudi and Indian Govt. positively by June/July, 2025. HGOs should also be prepared to use their own capital/avail loans rather than depending on collection of funds from the pilgrims for paying for their contracts, which are required to be paid much in advance to the actual date of Haj.
- (v) Pilgrims of HGOs who have been unable to proceed for Haj-2025 due to non-utilisation of quota by the CHGOs may now be booked for Haj 2026, subject to the following conditions:
- a. **Pilgrims who have made Full or partial Payment:** Pilgrims who have made the full or partial payment for Haj-2025 should be given 1st priority for Haj-2026, if they wish to proceed for Haj-2026. However, this needs to be within the quota that will be allotted to the CHGO/HGO for Haj-2026. If the pilgrims seek a refund of the payments made, it would be governed by the terms and conditions of the contracts entered into by each of the respective HGOs with the customers.
 - b. **Unutilised Seats:** If in the quota allocated in Haj-2026, any seats remain unutilised after adjusting all pilgrims as per clause (a) above, these may be offered in the open market to book new pilgrims for Haj-2026.

(vi) Financial Guidance :

- (a) For Haj-2025, till the final utilisable CHGO quota is confirmed by the Saudi Govt., all deposits made by CHGOs will remain in the *Nusuk* e-wallets of the respective CHGOs.
- (b) All CHGOs/HGOs may note that the full payment towards zone/camp and service providers for Haj-2026 will be required well in advance, i.e much before the last date of the Saudi timeline for opening of allocation of camp sites in Mina for Haj-2026.
- (c) All CHGOs are advised to retain enough funds in the *Nusuk* e-wallets of the CHGOs for booking of camps and finalisation of service provider contracts for Haj 2025. Once the final allocation of quota is made by the Saudis for Haj-2025, the CHGOs would have to option to withdraw the surplus funds or keep a token fund as a deposit for Haj-2026.


(Anup Barman)

Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

To,

All CHGOs & HGOs - for information & necessary action.

Copy to:

- (i) Senior PPS to Secretary(MA)
- (ii) PPS to JS(Haj)
- (iii) CEO, HCoI
- (iv) CGI, Jeddah

Copy also to:

- (i) Sr. Director, NIC-for uploading on website of this Ministry.
- (ii) Team Lead, IT support team- for uploading on HGO portal.