



VISITING THE UK WITH CHILDREN

Tragically, on ACC Akhtar's return to the UK on Thursday 12th January, he learnt that there had been a stampede at the Jamarat Bridge where a large number of people had died. In response to questions from the media, ACC Akhtar, based on what he had observed in Saudi Arabia, supported the work that had been done by the Saudi Arabian authorities and the considerable efforts that the Ministry of the Interior had gone to ensure a safe as possible Hajj. However although the deaths were tragic and distressing, he noted that given the scale of the operation it was almost impossible to guarantee 100% safety but the Saudi authorities continually sought to make the Hajj safer. For example, he saw plans to develop the Jamarat Bridge immediately after the conclusion of this year's Hajj. He noted that policing crowds of this magnitude (larger than the entire population of the county of West Yorkshire, which is policed by the fourth largest Police force in England and Wales and sixth largest in the UK) was a vast challenge.

ACC Akhtar commented after his visit "All the officers I met were very committed to the task in hand and, most importantly, did not simply see it as a duty. Instead, they saw it as a service to Allah and in fact saw it as an opportunity to gain his blessing by serving his guests, the pilgrims who had come to perform Hajj. I feel it important to mention this sense of service to the Pilgrims and devotion to Allah because in large numbers these are officers who are not normally based in Makkah, but are brought in from the other cities from all over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".

He concluded "The scale of the Hajj is such that there is nothing in the UK that can be compared to it. However, this does not mean that there are no opportunities to exchange professional learning and learn from each other. I would like to express my sincere thanks to His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif and his staff in the Ministry of Interior for their kind hospitality."

The UK warmly welcomes visitors from the Arab world. We offer a first-class visa service across the region. Over the next two years we will be making changes to the way we work and introducing new technology. This will improve our service. It will better protect our borders. We will keep our visa customers informed as we bring in these changes.

We have recently changed the way we deal with visa applications for children. This change will apply worldwide. It will help us to protect vulnerable children and fight trafficking.

Visit visas for children aged 17 and under must now show the name of the person travelling with the child. Parents will also now need to show that they have given permission for the child to travel.

If you are applying for a visa for a child this means:

- ❖ Parents will need to say on the visa application form who will accompany and care for the child. Children will still be able to travel unaccompanied. But parents will need to explain arrangements for their care in Britain when they make a visa application.
- ❖ The person accompanying the child will be named on the visa. This can be a parent or other adult. But the child will be able to travel only with a person named on their visa.
- ❖ If you provide all the information we need with your visa application, we will be able to issue it very quickly.

If you need information or advice on visas for children or about how to apply for a UK visa you should contact your nearest British Diplomatic mission.

You can get more information on the UK's worldwide visa operation from the UKvisas website, www.ukvisas.gov.uk.