

Current Event

Hajj and MERS

Ministry of Health (MoH), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) made necessary arrangements to have a safe Hajj season free of MERS.

Editorial Notes

Mass gatherings at religious events can pose major public health challenges, particularly transmission of infectious diseases. Every year KSA hosts pilgrimage to Makkah (*Hajj*), the largest annual gathering where over 2.5 million people from over 180 countries congregate; most of *Hajjees* are usually aged 50 years of age or older. *Hajjees* live and move together in crowded conditions, thus get exposed as well as the local population to imported epidemic-prone diseases. Unlike other communicable diseases, MERS-CoV is entrenched in KSA and has never been imported from other countries. Previous Hajj seasons were free from MERS; not even a single case has been diagnosed among *Hajjees* and/or local population during the *Hajj* season within the *Hajj* zone. According to the International Health Regulation (IHR) Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization, occurrence of MERS in KSA is not a justification for restriction of travel to and/or trade with KSA during *Hajj* season. However, KSA discourages people with pre-existing major chronic medical conditions to perform *Hajj*.

In preparation for *Hajj*, MoH, KSA provides regular updated travel advice and health regulations for *Hajjees*. During *Hajj*, MoH in collaboration with other national authorities, further strengthens public health surveillance, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures, capacity building, increases workforce, number of functioning health-care facilities and pro-

Table 1:

Training of HCWs Recruited for Hajj on IPC as of 16 August, 2016*[▲]

* There are no HCWs from Qunfotha and Al-Jouf for Hajj this season.

[▲] IPC training is still ongoing to ensure 100% training of recruits in respective regions.

	Region	Recruited	Trained	% Trained
1	Bisha	219	219	100
2	Makkah	7877	7835	99.47
3	Riyadh	1400	1342	95.85
4	Qassim	405	385	95.06
5	Hafr Al-Batin	103	97	94.17
6	Eastern Region	380	340	89.47
7	Northern Borders	69	60	86.95
8	Taif	753	609	80.88
9	Hail	201	156	77.61
10	Madinah	6200	4588	74
11	Al-Ahsaa	263	194	73.76
12	Al-Baha	153	100	65.35
13	Qurayyat	20	9	45
14	Tabuk	150	63	42
15	Jeddah	1200	390	32.5

Recent Publications:

Kim SY, Park SJ, Cho SY, Cha RH, Jee HG, Kim G, Shin HS, Kim Y, Jung YM, Yang JS, Kim SS, Cho SI, Kim MJ, Lee JS, Lee SJ, Seo SH, Park SS, Seong MW. Viral RNA in Blood as Indicator of Severe Outcome in Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus Infection. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2016 Oct 15;22(10). [Ahead of Print]

Cases of MERS-CoV: International Week (IW) No. 32: 7- 13 August 2016

Total	1
Symptomatic (S)	1
Asymptomatic (AS)	0
Healthcare worker (S)	0
Healthcare Worker (AS)	0

motes health educational programs (*Table 1*). KSA provides free medical services to all *Hajjees* throughout the *Hajj* season in all areas visited by *Hajjees*.

The Saudi authorities have relocated camels' markets outside the *Hajj* zone, banned trading, slaughtering of camels within holy sites and prohibited visit of *Hajjees* to camels' slaughter houses and markets; violators will face harsh penalties. During the last *Hajj* season contacts (household and health-care worker [HCW]) with confirmed MERS cases were denied permits to perform *Hajj* as long as they are still in the incubation period.

MERS-CoV in KSA 2016*

Region	Case	Primary	Secondary	U.C.
Riyadh (1)	68	28	38	2
Qassim	37	11	23	3
Najran	11	9	1	1
Jeddah	9	6	2	1
Hail	7	6	0	1
Taif	6	5	1	0
Eastern Region	6	5	1	0
Al-Ahsaa	5	5	0	0
Asir	5	4	1	0
Madinah	4	4	0	0
Al-Baha	2	1	0	1
Bisha	1	1	0	0
Tabuk	1	1	0	0
Makkah	0	0	0	0
Al-Jouf	0	0	0	0
Jazan	0	0	0	0
Northern Borders	0	0	0	0
Qunfotha	0	0	0	0
Hafr Al-Batin	0	0	0	0
Qurayyat	0	0	0	0
Total	162	86	67	9

Case: Confirmed Symptomatic. U.C.: Unclassified cases
*Period: Form 3 Jan to 13 August 2016
Regions with new cases of this week are highlighted in yellow.

