What caused the Hajj stampede?

AGENCIES

After a deadly crush killed hundreds of people during the Hajj in Saudi Arabia, a critical question remains: What caused the chaotic stampede?

Among the suggested causes: pilgrims rushing to complete the rituals, heat, masses of faithful pushing against each other in opposite directions, even confusion among the many first-timers. TOO MANY PEOPLE

The millions of pilgrims must perform a litany of rituals in five days, including the symbolic stoning of the devil in Mina. That's where the deadly stampede took place Thursday.

Hajj pilgrim Ethar El-Katatney, a journalist and blogger, said people were trying to push their way in opposite directions -- some headed to the site of the stoning, some coming back from their previous ritual.

"As our group started to head back, taking Road 204, another group, coming from Road 206, crossed our way," said another worshipper, Ahmed Mohammed Amer.

"Heavy pushing ensued. I'm at a loss of words to describe what happened. This massive pushing caused the high number of casualties, " he said.

Time pressures may have contrib-

tough part will be to get the support

and the funds to reach the 17

Sustainable Development Goals

The implementation of the goals is

expected to cost \$3.5 trillion to \$5

They replace and expand on the

UN's previous road map, the

Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs) that were adopted in 2000

The new goals are more ambitious,

and are meant to apply to every coun-

try, not just the developing world.

Stated in broad terms, the goals are

accompanied by 169 specific targets

meant to advance the goals in concrete

ways. Most are meant to be achieved by

2030, though some have shorter dead-

Hailing the new 2030 agenda as a

universal, integrated and

transformative vision for a better

world, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-

moon said the new agenda is a prom-

ise by leaders to all people everywhere.

"It is an agenda for people, to end

poverty in all its forms -- an agenda for

the planet, our common home," he

The 17 SDGs and 169 targets of the

new agenda will be monitored and

reviewed using a set of global indica-

tors. The global indicator framework,

added.

mainly for the developing countries.

(SDGs) of the new agenda.

trillion every year until 2030.

FROM PAGE 1

World adopts

uted to the disaster as well, El-Katatney said. "There's so little time to complete the rituals."

EXTREME HEAT AND EXHAUSTION The journey is physically gruelling enough on its own.

But with temperatures soaring over 43 degrees Celsius, anyone who succumbs to the elements might collapse and never recover, El-Katatney said.

"I was out for a couple of hours just kind of taking photos, recording. And just two hours standing in the sun makes you so dizzy and so incredibly faint," she said from Mina.

INEXPERIENCE AND CONFUSION

Even though Saudi officials are extremely versed in hosting Hajj crowds, many of the pilgrims are making the journey for the first time and might not be prepared to follow all directions or handle the chaos.

"If any mistake happens -- if a group makes the wrong turn -- that will cause a disaster," Jamal Khashoggi of Saudi Arabia's El Arab TV told CNN. "And that's exactly what happened yesterday."

Maj Gen Mansour Al-Turki, the Saudi Interior Ministry's security spokesman, hinted that the problem may have stemmed from some pilgrims not following established guidelines, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

and Expert Group on SDG Indicators,

will be agreed on by the UN Statistical

their own national indicators to assist

in monitoring progress made on the

Ushering in a new era of national

action and international cooperation,

the new agenda commits every country

to take an array of actions that would

not only address the root causes of

poverty, but would also accelerate

economic growth, meet people's

health, education and social needs,

setting agendas of UN conferences and

the widely successful Millennium

Development Goals that have improved

world is facing immense challenges,

ranging from widespread poverty to

pledged common action and

endeavour across such a broad and

universal policy agenda," states the

declaration adopted by the leaders.

the risks posed by climate change.

The new agenda recognises that the

"Never before have world leaders

The new SDGs build on the goal-

and protect the environment.

the lives of millions of people.

Governments will also develop

Commission by March next year.

goals and targets.



Pilgrims touch the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Makkah while performing the Hajj late on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Saudi Arabia under fire

FROM PAGE 1

own website. questions. The death of more than 1,000 people is not a small issue. Muslim countries should focus on this," Khamenei said. Other Iranian officials have also alleged the total

death toll is more than 1,000. Iran has vowed to take international legal action against Saudi Arabia's rulers over the disaster.

"We will urge international courts and circles to start the trial of the Saudis for their crimes against Hajj pilgrims," Iran's Prosecutor General Ebrahim Raisi was quoted as saying by ISNA news agency yesterday. "It is not only incompetence, but a crime."

He has accused Saudi authorities of blocking a road used by Hajj pilgrims to allow a royal convoy to pass through -- which he alleged led to the convergence -- something Saudi authorities have denied.

On Saturday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani demanded an investigation into the "heart-rending incident" in a speech at the United Nations.

Iran's foreign ministry also summoned the Saudi chargé d'affaires for a third time in three days to protest about Riyadh's handling of the disas-"We are setting out together on the | ter.

path towards sustainable develop-At least 155 Iranian pilgrims died ment, devoting ourselves collectively in a crush of pilgrims on Thursday near Mecca and 300 other Iranians to the pursuit of global development and of 'win-win' cooperation which remain unaccounted for, including rity. can bring huge gains to all countries former ambassador to Lebanon Ghazanfar Roknabadi, Iranian state

media has said.

large groups of pilgrims collided at a crossroads in Mina, a few kilometers east of Mecca, on their way to performing the "stoning of the devil" ritual at Jamarat.

'PLAYING POLITICS'

Saudi Arabia firmly rejected Iran's criticism on Saturday, saying the Islamic republic "shouldn't play politics with a tragedy".

would be more sensible and more thoughtful with regards to those who perished in this tragedy, and wait until we see the results of the investigation," said Foreign Minister Adel al-

The disaster was the second deadly accident to mar the Hajj. A massive construction crane collapsed on the Grand Mosque in the nearby holy city of Mecca days beforehand, killing 109 people, many of them pilgrims.

Undeterred, pilgrims in Mina still flooded the area to perform the ritual stoning for a third time, on the last day of the Hajj which this year drew about two million people.

They also stood in prayer.

Most began leaving on Saturday, returning to Makkah where many performed the tawaf -- where they circumambulate the Kaaba in the middle of the sacred site at the Grand Mosque -- watched on by heavy secu-

Dozens of emergency workers were seen on one level of Jamarat Bridge, a Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, told

five-storey structure in Mina where Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef The disaster, the worst to befall the pilgrims ritually stone the devil, and that the incident was beyond human "The Islamic world has a lot of haj in 25 years, happened when two on which hundreds of thousands control. were converging when Thursday's stampede occurred nearby.

> Many more patrolled the network of roads leading to the structure, which resembles a parking garage.

assigned 100,000 police to secure the Hajj and manage crowds.

But pilgrims blamed the stampede continues. on police road closures and poor "I would hope Iranian leaders management of the throng, during searing temperatures.

> to the front for safety but police were saying 'Go back! Go back!'" said Nigerian Abbas Tijani, who escaped with injuries.

> "Everybody was trying to survive," he said from his hospital bed. "People were stepped on by people."

In all, 769 people were killed and 934 others were wounded, according to Health Minister Khaled al-Falih. 'FATE AND DESTINY'

Abdullah al-Sheikh, chairman of the Shura Council, which advises the government, stressed that pilgrims must stick to "the rules and regulations taken by the security person-

That echoed comments Friday by Health Minister Falih, who faulted the worshippers for the tragedy, saying that if "the pilgrims had followed instructions, this type of accident could have been avoided".

Saudi Arabia's top religious leader,

"You are not responsible for what happened," official news agency SPA quoted Sheikh as telling him.

"Fate and destiny are inevitable." Authorities have yet to provide a The interior ministry has said it breakdown of the nationalities of pilgrims killed in the stampede, as the difficult process of identification

ACRIMONY FLARES UP

Shia Muslim Iran is involved in a number of conflicts in Arab countries. "People were trying to manoeuvre including Iraq, Syria and Yemen, to great opposition from the Sunni Muslim kingdom. The deaths at Mina have caused the simmering acrimony between the two countries to flare up.

A cartoon published by Iran's conservative Tasnim news agency depicted King Salman of Saudi Arabia as a camel trampling pilgrims under its hooves, while the conservative Kayhan newspaper showed the king shaking hands with one of the pillars symbolising the devil in the stoning

Meanwhile, the Saudi daily AsSharq al-Awsat appeared to blame Iranian pilgrims for the disaster. It quoted what it called Iranian officials as saying a group of 300 Iranian pilgrims had set off to perform a ritual ahead of their assigned schedule, leading to a collision with other pil-

From AFP, Reuters and

Reunited after 20yrs

to be developed by the Inter-Agency and all parts of the world."

devil, reports the Saudi Gazette.

A day after the incident, he was spotted sitting on a pavement near Mina Al-Jisr Hospital.

last day but now she's forever gone," he said, with tears rolling down from his eyes and voice turned hoarse from hours of weeping and crying.

Bilal has been living in the Kingdom for about 25 years. He is now working at an apparel store Dhahran Al-Janoub of Asir region.

"I have been saving money for about 20 years to bring my wife for Hajj. I have been away from her for long years. When she finally came, I lost her in seconds only.

"She died right in front of my eyes. She would never again see her three children. "She hugged her three children very tightly as if she had a notion that this

would be her last journey." Bilal said he and his wife threw stones together at the Satan and were on their way out of the Jamrat area at about 7:30am.

"We entered the street No. 204 and were met by human floods that were going to the Jamrat. We tried to escape but the rush was so huge that we both | of the 50 others is critical," Haab as saying by the Saudi daily.

Many pilgrims fell on them but he managed to get up despite his exhaustion and the burns he suffered from the hot ground, he said.

"I cried, 'Please save my wife!' But no one would listen to me. Everyone was busy trying to save themselves. I tried to pull her out of the large number of bodies over her but failed. I saw her eyes wide open, looking skyward .. She died without saying goodbye to me or our children."

Asked about his own health condition, he said he had suffered burns in his face, back and legs after he fell down on the extremely hot road.

"I am still in the hospital waiting to have a final look at my wife and bid her

11 Bangladeshis among the dead

"Of the 80 injured, 30 have returned to their camps after taking primary treatment. But the condition of most Daily Star.

Details of the 11 dead Bangladeshis, who are among the 769 Hajjis killed, could not be known because the Saudi authorities were not allowing anyone in the hospitals, he

released 650 photos of the dead so far, but that included only two photos of Bangladeshis. Meanwhile, citing the Bangladesh

Ibrahim said Saudi authorities

Consulate General in Jeddah, the foreign ministry in Dhaka confirmed the identity of one victim -- Md that befell Hajj in 25 years. Shahidul Islam of Khulna.

Two more dead bodies have been identified as Bangladeshis but their details were not available either.

Australia delay tour

female Hajji Firoza Khanam confirmed her death in the stampede, said

a foreign ministry statement.

They are Tahera Begum, 73, widow of late Nurul Haque Master of Matiganj union of Sonagazi; her brother Nur Nabi alias Mintu, 69, of Nadona village under Bogadana union of Sonagazi; and Khaleda Akhter, 34, of Paglir Kul village under Chithalia union of Parshuram.

confirmed the death of his mother dead. and his uncle, citing his telephone conversation with Imam Uddin, who has been injured in the biggest tragedy

Khaleda's death was confirmed by Hafez Jahangir of Parshuram.

She went to perform Hajj with her husband Joynal Abednin, head clerk

In addition, family members of a of Feni District Registrar. Joynal is numbers are 00966537375859 and Jahangir's brother.

Another couple from Kalabagan in Dhaka -- AK Fazlul Haque tried these numbers several times but Our Feni correspondent said Chowdhury, 57, general manager of no one picked up the call. "She promised to be with me till my fell down on the road," he was quoted President Ibrahim Bahar told The three of those killed are from the Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Ltd, and his wife Halima Akhter, 51 -- were killed in the stampede, said their only son Farhan Naveed Chowdhury.

"I came to know this from my tion. uncle's colleague who was with my parents," Farhan, 24, told The Daily

It is not clear if this couple or the three people from Feni are among Tahera Begum's son Maeen Uddin the 11 that the Haab believes to be

Bangladesh's foreign ministry in its statement said medical teams were working at various hospitals in Makkah and collecting information about missing Hajjis.

The Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia opened hotlines for the relatives to inquire about the Hajjis. The Bangladeshis went to perform Hajj.

high degree of caution' (level 2 of 4).

Australia's decision to delay the depar-

ture of the Australian tour to

Bangladesh, and we remain in close

contact with Cricket Australia and

CEO James Sutherland, during a press

conference in Brisbane yesterday,

noted that the travel advice was for

ordinary Australians travelling in

"The advice is for ordinary civilians

who are travelling on holidays or on

business in Bangladesh, which is very

of security if the tour went ahead.

Hope, however, isn't lost as yet. CA

00966509360082.

However, Farhan Naveed said he

Citing their personnel in Makkah, the Haab president said they feared more deaths of Bangladeshi Hajjis, but were not getting adequate informa-

"Hospitals are not allowing us in. So, we don't have accurate information on the injured or the dead.

"Relatives are calling us anxiously, but we are failing to provide them proper information," Ibrahim said.

Bangladesh's Religious Affairs Minister Matiur Rahman, Secretary Chowdhury Md Babul Hasan and Haab leaders were scheduled to meet in Makkah yesterday evening to discuss the latest development.

This year, over 1,00,000

PM pledges

Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over the session. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and 17 heads of state and government, including the presidents of Mexico and Kenya and the prime minister of Denmark, took part in the discussion.

Hasina said Bangladesh was committed to carrying on its efforts to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women. "We shall create a safer environment for our women and girls to thrive as agents of change."

She said the government had taken initiatives to eliminate child marriage by 2041. "We shall continue to give attention to maternal health and nutrition, and work for increasing the nity."

rate of skilled birth attendance." The PM said Bangladesh attaches the highest importance to women's participation in all walks of life and

livelihoods. She also spelled out some successful programmes of her government for the welfare of the womenfolk.

These programmes, she said, included free education for girls up to 12th grade, stipends for girl students, free pre and post-natal healthcare, easy credit facilities, vocational and Information and Communication Technology training.

On Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on Friday Hasina said it would offer added impetus for bringing about positive changes in the lives of the women and girls. "We should seize this opportu-

FROM PAGE 1 Commission where he held a meeting with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hasan Papon.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Papon indicated that the BCB was ready to extend its wholehearted support to the CA's security team. "He, along with his team, will speak

to different security agencies and only after that we can come to a decision," said Papon.

"I have said that they can speak to any security agency they want to. No matter what I say regarding the situation, they won't believe me because I neither belong to any security agency nor to any intelligence department," added the BCB president.

When asked if the BCB reckoned that the tour could go on as scheduled,

Papon said, "I still don't think there is any harm. But it depends on what information they have. Till now they haven't told me anything about it."

Soon after the meeting, BCB officials stated that Carroll met up with the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and the National Security Intelligence (NSI). Today Carroll has a meeting scheduled at the Bangladesh authorities on this matter." Home Ministry.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan had yesterday ruled out Australia's "militancy fear" as "baseless". "There is no such threat of militancy in Bangladesh," he told reporters at the secretariat.

The Australian High Commission released an official statement which read: "On 25 September, the travel advice for Bangladesh was reissued to advise that militants may be planning

which is afforded the highest level of to target Australian interests in security by Bangladesh police and Bangladesh. The level of the advice has armed forces while they're there. Those not changed -- it remains at 'Exercise a things need to be weighed up in the "We are naturally aware of Cricket

circumstances, "Sutherland said.

"Our position is we want the tour to go ahead as planned. This has obviously come very suddenly and we've needed to make this response. Our preferred position is to continue with the tour, but the safety and security of our players and staff is the absolute priority and the first priority for us is to secure that," he added.

As per the original schedule, the Bangladesh, and the Australian cricket Australian contingent was supposed to team would have extremely high levels arrive here today. They were scheduled to play a three-day warm up match against BCB XI in Fatullah on October 3 before the two Test matches -- Oct 9-13 in Chittagong and Oct 17-21 in different to the Australian cricket team, Dhaka.