

## **Saudi Arabia reviews construction safety after Grand Mosque tragedy**

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**dpa**

Saudi Arabian authorities are examining safety standards of construction equipment at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah, an official said today, a day after a massive crane collapsed there killing 107 people.

"The contractor in charge has been asked to ensure safety standards in all cranes at the site under the supervision of a specialised team," Hesham al-Faleh, the head of governmental agency for Makkah development, said.

He added that an inquiry commission had inspected the site of the incident late yesterday.

"Causes of the accident will be announced after investigations are completed," al-Faleh said in a statement without elaborating.

Authorities said yesterday that the crane had crashed in a courtyard outside the mosque due to a severe rainstorm.

They added that at least 107 people were killed and 238 wounded in the incident, which occurred 10 days before the annual haj pilgrimage season.

There was no official word on the nationalities of the victims.

However, Egypt said today that two of its pilgrims died due to the injuries they had sustained in the crane fall.

Pakistan meanwhile said that 47 of the people injured in the incident were Pakistani pilgrims.

More than 909,000 pilgrims have already arrived in Saudi Arabia for the haj rituals due to begin on Sept 21, according to official figures released today.

More than 1 million pilgrims are expected for this year's haj.

Last year, Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, started construction work to expand the Grand Mosque.

The mosque, Islam's holiest site, has in its centre, the cube-shaped Kaaba to which Muslims around the world direct their faces in their daily prayers.

Muslims are expected to perform the pilgrimage at least once during their lifetime if they have the means to do so.

The annual congregation is one of the world's hugest.

Over the years, pilgrims in Saudi Arabia have lost their lives due to stampedes and fires.

In 2006, a stampede killed nearly 350 pilgrims.

In recent years, the oil-rich kingdom has spent a lot of money on making the pilgrimage rituals easier and safer.

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