



Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy
Equality Justice Compassion Peace

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Press statement

IMSD welcomes new policy of Haj by women without Mehram

Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy (IMSD) welcomes the Union government's proposed new Haj Policy which enables women above 45 years of age to be allowed in a group of four or more to go for Haj without Mehram.

(A mehram it may be noted is any male -- father, brother, son etc – with whom marriage is prohibited for a woman in Islam).

In principle, IMSD sees no reason why an adult female should not be able to go to Haj entirely on her own. The fact is that in today's day and age any number of young Muslim women travel alone all over India and across the globe for any number of reasons including higher studies, professional pursuit etc. Why then should any conditions be imposed on them for travelling to perform a religious obligation?

We understand that the Indian government can do little in this matter as the age and group restrictions are part of the visa policy of the Saudi government. We therefore call upon the Saudi government to do away with any kind of restriction on adult Muslim women intending to go to Haj.

We regret to note that the ulema are still living in the 7th century. In an age when modes and speed of travel were limited and security arrangements by the state were unheard of, a mehram was meant for a woman's safety and security. In today's world it is the responsibility of the state to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, women included.

In principle, IMSD is opposed to any kind of state subsidy for religious affairs. It therefore calls for an end to what is called 'Haj subsidy' but which in fact is a subsidy for Air India, a public sector enterprise.

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