Hajj 2016 by the numbers

Mecca (Saudi Arabia) (AFP) - The hajj pilgrimage, which got under way in the Muslim holy places in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, is one of the world's largest annual gatherings.

Here are some figures illustrating its scale, according to officials and local media:

- More than 1.4 million pilgrims from abroad are expected to join in excess of 100,000 from inside Saudi Arabia.

- The pilgrims will be transported on 18,000 buses, of which 1,696 are new.

- The Saudi hajj and umrah ministry has mobilised some 60,000 staff.

- 158 sickbays along the pilgrimage routes. 25 hospitals and 5,000 hospital beds available.

- Helicopters, 100 ambulances and 51 medical buses on standby.

- 17,000 emergency services personnel deployed.

- 1.5 million containers of water from Mecca's Zamzam spring to be distributed to pilgrims when the hajj reaches its climax on Sunday.

- 23,000 cleaners to keep the Mecca area tidy.

- Foreign pilgrims spent almost 20 billion riyals ($5.3 billion) during the hajj in 2015.

- At least 2,297 pilgrims died during the 2015 stampede, according to officials from more than 30 countries. Saudi Arabia never updated an initial toll of 769.