

Those responsible for Mina tragedy must be held accountable

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Mecca: The Imam of the Grand Mosque here has demanded that those responsible for the Mina stampede, the worst tragedy to hit the annual pilgrimage in 25 years, should be held accountable and asked Saudi authorities to ensure that such incidents are not repeated.

"The efforts of tens of thousands of the people who engage in serving the guests of God should not go waste," Sheikh Saleh Al-Talib, the Imam of the Grand Mosque that houses the Kaaba, said in his Friday sermon.

Al-Talib urged the Saudi authorities to ensure that such incidents are not repeated and hold the negligent in this regard accountable for their faults.

Hitting out at those critical of the Saudi government over the stampede, Al-Talib said it was not acceptable to misuse any accident happening to Muslims for worldly or political gains.

"The Kingdom, equipped with all its resources and capabilities, is exerting every effort to serve Haj and Umrah pilgrims as well as visitors to The Holy Mosques for decades, and occurrence of an accident due to heavy rush or stampede of some pilgrims or violation of its regulations won't mitigate this lofty position of the Kingdom," he said.

More than 700 pilgrims including 18 Indians were killed and over 850 injured in the grisly stampede in Mina when two massive lines of pilgrims converged on each other from different directions at an intersection close to the five-storey Jamarat Bridge in Mina for the symbolic stoning of the devil.

Al-Talib said that Saudi Arabia is fully capable of managing Haj affairs effectively and it has sovereign power in carrying out the duty of serving the two Holy Mosques and the 'guests of God'.

Emphasising that the Saudi authorities have chalked out rules and regulations for the smooth conduct of Haj, the Imam called on the pilgrims to abide strictly by these rules so as to enable them to perform their rituals with ease and comfort.

More than a million worshippers, including hundreds of thousands of pilgrims performed Friday prayers at the Grand Mosque yesterday.

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