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The title seems both mysterious and exciting! To cut the reader's confusion short, the title is related to the Saudi Project for the Utilisation of Hajj Meat. It simply means that, last year, the Project was able to slaughter about a million livestock in 84 hours and distributed them to deserving beneficiaries in 27 countries of the Muslim world. Distribution started with the poor in the Haram area of Makkah.

This pioneering and outstanding project was launched 37 years ago, precisely in 1403AH/1983G. The Islamic Development Bank was honoured to manage it on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Project has helped facilitate the performance of rituals, protect the environment of the holy sites from pollution and prevent meat waste by providing meat to the poor and the needy. Providing food to the poor and the hungry receives special attention from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this context, the IsDB is working with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to expand the scope of the Project to include fighting hunger in the Muslim world, especially in the light of the steady increase in the numbers of the poor and hungry in IsDB member countries.

The IsDB, which was chosen by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to manage this project, is an international development financing institution established 47 years ago at the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide economic and social support to member countries and Muslim communities in non-member countries. Its membership includes 57 countries, 21 of which are among the least developed and least fortunate countries of the world. IsDB member countries span four continents, namely Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. Its operations and activities cover vast regions of the world, from Indonesia in the east to Suriname in the west, and from Uzbekistan in the north to Mozambique in the south. The IsDB serves 1.7 billion Muslims, i.e. one of every five people worldwide. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest shareholder in IsDB capital, with approximately 25% of the capital. The IsDB has been granted the highest credit rating from the three largest international rating agencies, and enjoys high credibility at the local, regional and international levels.

Before the Project, livestock would be slaughtered and thrown in Mina between the camps and on the road. In the evening, vehicles of the municipality, or *Amanat Al-Asimah*, would collect the meat and bury or burn it. There are photographs, films, articles, and novels from that period showing the scale of soil, air and ground water pollution and the persisting smell of dead livestock in Mina for nearly two months after the end of Hajj. The Government was spending about 20 million riyals to make potholes and landfills to accommodate these carcasses.

However, after the issuance of the fatwa authorising the use of sacrificial meat for distribution to the poor of the Haram as well as among the Muslim poor, the Kingdom established this outstanding

Project. In the first year of the Project, 63,000 livestock were slaughtered, and the number kept increasing with the increase in the number of pilgrims, until it reached nearly a million last year. Distribution of meat to the poor of the Haram starts on the first day of the blessed *Eid al-Adha*, and shipping to Muslim countries starts on the first day of Muharram. In addition, meat is distributed within the Kingdom through 250 charities which are accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and which have refrigerators to preserve meat and freezers to transport it to the deserving beneficiaries.

When the Corona pandemic emerged in the Kingdom, the Project participated in the campaign launched by His Royal Highness Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, the Governor of the Makkah Region, "*Birran Bi Makkah*", to help the needy. The Project, in cooperation with charities, neighbourhood associations and Awqaf in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, has distributed 15,000 carcasses or 150,000 kilogrammes of meat; nearly 13,000 carcasses were also distributed to various charities within the Kingdom.

The total amount of sacrificial meat distributed from the beginning of the Project until the 1440H season has reached approximately 33 million livestock to approximately 100 million people from the Muslim world.

The Project is supervised by ten government agencies: the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call and Guidance; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah; the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Agriculture; the Ministry of Labour and Social Development; Makkah Al-Mukarramah Development Authority; and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Institute for Hajj and Umrah Research.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's support for the Project is unlimited. In the context of facilitating the performance of the rituals and expanding the project's role in providing food to the Muslim poor, the Kingdom has allocated more than two billion riyals to establish new slaughterhouses equipped with an integrated automatic system for skinning and meat cleaning, cutting, transport, packaging, preservation, distribution and canning, as well as a renewable energy plant, a wastewater treatment plant and a central complex to accommodate 1.5 million carcasses with the possibility of expanding site capacity to about five million carcasses. This is upon the instructions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and His Royal Highness Muhammad bin Salman - may Allah protect them.

Studies and designs have been prepared and offered for bidding. Other forms of the Kingdom's support for the Project include exempting over 20,000 project employees from visa fees, support for livestock voucher purchases, in addition to other forms of support.

The Project Management is working with the IsDB Strategy and Transformation Department to prepare a comprehensive study to expand the Project's role to be one of the tools of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to fight hunger in the Muslim world. Some member countries are suffering from famines and, according to the Global Hunger Index, the number of hungry people is increasing, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia as a result of wars, armed conflicts, droughts, climate change and the spread of diseases and epidemics. Also, the number of people dying from

hunger is increasing. Therefore, the Project launched a number of programmes, such as the Charity, Birth Sacrifice and Will Programme, with the aim of increasing the number of livestock distributed among the poor and needy suffering from hunger. The Will Programme allows a person to sign a contract with the Project to allocate a certain amount of money over a number of years for the Project to slaughter livestock for the testator after his or her death.

I take the opportunity of the blessed month of Ramadan to invite my brothers and sisters in IsDB member countries and in Muslim communities in non-member countries to help support the Project by participating in its various programmes. The aim is to increase the number of livestock that are being used so that the Project can reach larger numbers of deserving beneficiaries. It is Allah Almighty who will reward those who help the Project fight hunger in the world.