

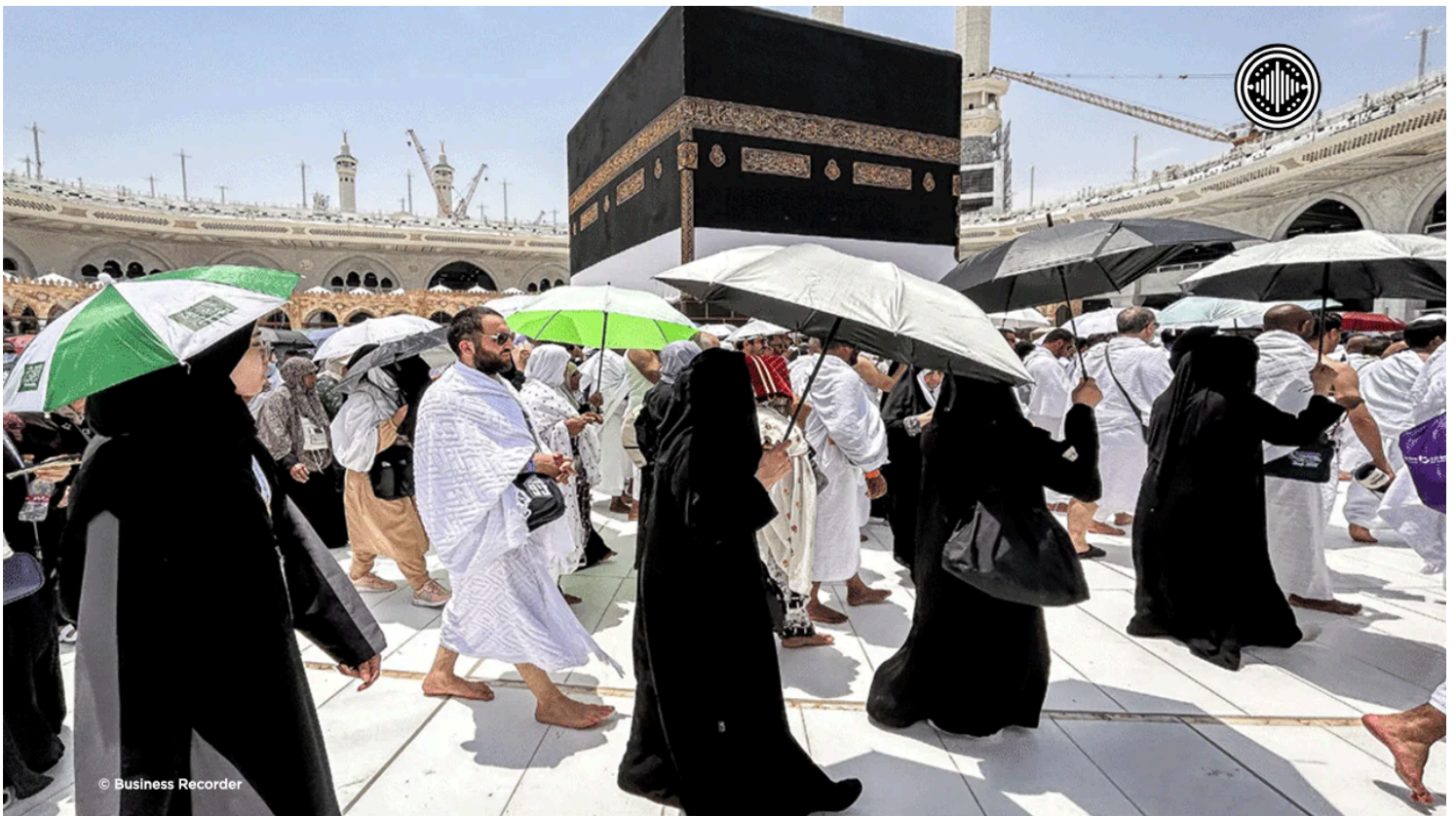
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Over 71,000 Apply for Pakistan Govt Hajj Scheme

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The first phase of the Government Hajj Scheme 2026 has concluded, with more than 71,000 applications submitted along with the initial instalment of Rs500,000. This phase was open only to pilgrims who had previously registered for Hajj.

According to officials, the second phase will begin on August 11 and will be open to both registered and unregistered applicants. This phase will run until August 16, with applications accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants are required to submit the first instalment of expenses along with their application.

Government officials expect that over 16,000 Pakistani pilgrims will perform Hajj next year under the official quota. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has advised that applications will close once the quota is filled, and those applying early will have a higher chance of securing a spot.

The spokesperson for the Ministry confirmed that overseas Pakistanis are also eligible to apply through close relatives at designated banks. However, medical fitness certificates for overseas applicants will need to be provided upon their arrival in Pakistan.

The Ministry emphasised that no applications will be accepted once the quota is reached, and all submissions must comply with the requirements set by the Hajj authorities. This structured process is designed to ensure fair and transparent allocation of the limited quota.

Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, draws millions of Muslims from around the world each year to Saudi Arabia. For Pakistani pilgrims, the government scheme aims to provide an organised and affordable way to perform the pilgrimage, ensuring proper facilities, guidance, and medical support.

Officials have also indicated that cultural tourism packages may be offered in the future to enhance pilgrims' overall travel experience, though these will be subject to further announcements.

With the next phase beginning tomorrow, prospective pilgrims, whether previously registered or applying for the first time, are advised to prepare their documents and payment promptly to avoid missing the opportunity.

The Government Hajj Scheme continues to play a vital role in enabling Pakistani Muslims to fulfil their religious obligation in a well-managed and cost-effective manner, in coordination with Saudi authorities.