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## Banks Open Saturday for Hajj Applications


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– Categories: Finance



In a special arrangement to facilitate last-minute applicants for Hajj 2026, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has directed 14 designated banks to remain open on Saturday, August 9. The measure, announced by SBP spokesperson Abid Qamar, aims to ensure that all intending pilgrims can complete their application process before the deadline. Participating banks will operate from 9:00 a.m. to accommodate the expected surge in applicants.

The decision follows a steady flow of Hajj applications in recent weeks, with a significant number of applicants submitting their forms close to the cutoff date. By opening on Saturday, the SBP and participating banks aim to ease pressure on regular banking hours and reduce the risk of applicants being turned away due to capacity limits. This move is expected to particularly assist those unable to visit branches during weekdays due to work or travel commitments.

Among the designated banks are major institutions including the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), Habib Bank Limited (HBL), United Bank Limited  (UBL), and MCB Bank Limited. Branches have been instructed to ensure adequate staffing and technical support to handle large volumes of applications efficiently. The SBP has also advised banks to coordinate with relevant authorities to ensure the secure handling of funds and proper documentation for all Hajj applicants.

The SBP's directive underscores the central bank's role in facilitating financial transactions linked to national religious activities. It also reflects an emphasis on ensuring that operational hurdles do not prevent eligible citizens from participating in the Hajj pilgrimage. No official announcements have been made regarding changes to the application process for future years, and the current arrangements are specific to the ongoing 2026 application period.