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## 35 Pakistani pilgrims died during Hajj: ministry

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At least 35 Pakistanis have lost their lives while performing Hajj this year due to extreme weather conditions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs confirmed on Thursday. According to an AFP report, over 900 pilgrims died during Hajj, with scorching temperatures and heat exhaustion blamed for many fatalities. Fatalities have been reported by Egypt, Pakistan, India, Jordan, Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, and Iraq. Director General of Pakistan's Haj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro said that as of 4pm on June 18, a total of 35 Pakistani deaths had been reported – 20 in Makkah, six in Madina, four in Mina, three in Arafat, and two in Muzdalifah. "Due to a temperature of 50°C, this was a tough Hajj," the official said. Soomro also dismissed social media claims of leaving the pilgrims "helpless". "We trust the Saudi government's information and we confirm it ourselves as well, whenever there's a death. We are informed." Meanwhile, the ministry added that under the Saudi government's rules, they seek permission from the heirs of the family for burial." After

bathing [the body], funeral prayers are offered here and burial takes place in Saudi Arabia.” In case the family wants the body back, it said, arrangements are made to send it to Pakistan. Media reports suggest that friends and family of missing Hajj pilgrims are searching hospitals and pleading online for news, fearing the worst. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. Its timing is determined by the Islamic lunar calendar, shifting forward each year in the Gregorian calendar. For the past several years the mainly outdoor rituals have fallen during the sweltering Saudi summer