

other hand, Pakistanis love to explain their religion to outsiders and respond eagerly to questions. Never hesitate to ask questions about Islam, but always with great respect.

### **Religious practices**

Pakistanis appreciate foreigners who respect the many rituals associated with Islam. Devout Muslims pray five times a day. Be aware of prayer times when scheduling training sessions or meetings so as not to have to interrupt them for prayers. The second prayer of the day, *Zuhr*, is during working hours. In summer it can be any time between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. In the winter it is earlier. Employers provide a break for the *Zuhr* prayer. It is normal for individuals to leave in the middle of an event to pray.

Muslims fast from dawn to dusk during the month of *Ramazan* (which runs from about February 2 to March 4 in 1995, 10 days earlier each successive year). Productivity in the country falls sharply because people are usually tired after delaying dinner until after sunset and waking up to eat before dawn. Government and banking hours are reduced during *Ramazan*; government works from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., banks from

8:00 a.m. to noon. It is strongly recommended that business people and short-term consultants avoid visiting Pakistan during *Ramazan*. Foreigners working in Pakistan during *Ramazan* should adjust their work schedules accordingly.

Muslims do not eat pork because it is forbidden in Islam. Pigs are considered dirty. Calling someone a pig is a supreme insult. Muslims eat with the right hand.

Pakistanis will assume you are Christian, if not by religion, then by culture. Most Muslims are tolerant of other religions, but frown on atheism.

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol is forbidden in Pakistan and is unavailable in public places. However, some Pakistanis have alcohol in their homes and will offer it to you. Never ask for it; ask for a soft drink instead. Though common practice, it is illegal to serve alcohol to Pakistanis of Muslim faith, even in your own home. Never offer Pakistanis alcohol unless they are close friends and are known to drink. As a non-Muslim you can buy alcohol for your own consumption after obtaining a permit.