

Overseas Pakistanis

Dawn / Letter to the Editor

January 10, 2017

MY two grown-up children are currently visiting Pakistan. They went to open savings accounts carrying all necessary documents, including their Nicops and Canadian passports, but both banks they visited refused to open accounts because their fingerprints could not be verified by their biometric machines/systems due to some problem between the banks and Nadra.

Both had their Nicops issued from Toronto by filling online applications, and both Nicops were checked and cleared by PIA in Toronto and by the immigration department in Karachi. Why is Nadra issuing online Nicops if it cannot later verify them? Why has the SBP introduced a biometric system if Nadra and the banks lack the capacity to manage it?

To add, my children told me that the staff at Nadra and NBP were rude, uncooperative and unprofessional.

In Canada, opening a bank account takes 15 minutes and requires only a passport copy and basic information filled on a one-page form. However, in Pakistan, some banks' forms can be up to 10 pages long.

Expats sometimes visit Pakistan for just seven to 10 days. The entire process of opening an account can take up to three weeks to complete. What era are Nadra, Chaudhry Nisar and SBP officials living in that this process can't be streamlined?

Shafiq Ahmed Khan, Toronto, Canada

SBP Clarification

State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi issued following clarification to Dawn, Karachi on Jan 13, 2017 for publication:

APROPOS the letter to the editor of Mr. Shafiq Ahmed Khan captioned "Overseas Pakistanis" published on 10-Jan-2017, it is clarified that the basic documentary evidence required to open bank accounts by individuals in Pakistan is national identity document i.e. CNIC/NICOP/POC etc and its successful verification from NADRA to prevent identity theft. In case of foreign nationals, passport having valid visa on it or other proof of legal stay is required to open a bank account. It is world-wide norm to meet necessary due diligence formalities to avail any financial services. The account opening process takes couple of days if necessary information is provided to banks and verification is completed satisfactorily. The process of biometric verification of customers from NADRA is an advance and instant tool to verify customers and being successfully used for verification of

customers' identity. Nevertheless, in case of any technical or connectivity related issues in biometric, banks are also allowed to facilitate their customers by using conventional mode of CNIC/NICOP/POC verification called NADRA Verisys. Generalized observations and unrealistic comparison with other countries is uncalled for.

The customers after meeting the necessary criteria and subject to satisfactory completion of due diligence requirements may open bank accounts in Pakistan. In case of any discrimination or mal practices by the bank, SBP's help desk may be contacted via <http://www.sbp.org.pk/cpd/cpd-help.asp> or email cpd.helpdesk@sbp.org.pk.
