

Eid ul-Adha is celebrated annually on the 10th day of the 12th and the last Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah of the lunar Islamic calendar. Eid ul-Adha celebrations start directly after the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia by Muslims worldwide, after the final act of descent from Mount Arafat. Ritual observance of the holiday lasts until sunset of the 13th day of Dhu al-Hijjah. Eid ul-Adha is the latter of two Eid festivals celebrated where Muslims all over the world celebrate with prayer, special delicacies and exchange of good wishes with friends, family and loved ones. In 2010, Eid ul-Adha began on November 16th, and will last for three days.

**Eid ul-Adha** or the "Festival of Sacrifice" or "Greater Eid" is an important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide to commemorate the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his son Ishmael (Isma'il) as an act of obedience to God, before God intervened to provide him with a ram to sacrifice instead. Muslims during this period sacrifice their domestic animals like goat, sheep, cow, camel etc. The meat is divided into three parts to be distributed to others. The family retains one third of the share, another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors, and the other third is given to the poor & needy.

The act symbolizes our willingness to give up things that are of benefit to us or close to our hearts, in order to follow God's commands. It also symbolizes our willingness to give up some of our own bounties, in order to strengthen ties of friendship and help those who are in need. We recognize that all blessings come from God, and we should open our hearts and share with others.

It is very important to understand that the sacrifice itself, as practiced by Muslims, has nothing to do with atoning for our sins or using the blood to wash ourselves from sin. "It is neither the meat nor the blood that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him." (Qur'an 22:37). It is therefore a celebration hailing the sacrifice of self and ego to the Almighty God. The festival lays great emphasis on charity and empathy for the needy and the underprivileged and the symbolism is in the attitude - a willingness to make sacrifices in our lives in order to stay on the Straight Path. A true believer, one who submits his or herself completely to the Lord, is willing to follow the Lord's commands completely and obediently. It is this strength of heart, purity in faith, and willing obedience that our Lord desires from us for the benefit of all mankind.

I would like to take the opportunity on this joyous occasion, to wish all our Muslim colleagues and their families ***Eid ul Adha Mubarak*** and may you enjoy a peaceful, fulfilling and inspiring period with your loved ones. May the innocence, purity and sincerity of all our prayers and sacrifices enable peace and prosperity in the world commencing in our ability to see God everywhere, and in everyone.

Mec: Human Settlements and Public Works, Maggie Govender

