

Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated with traditional gaiety

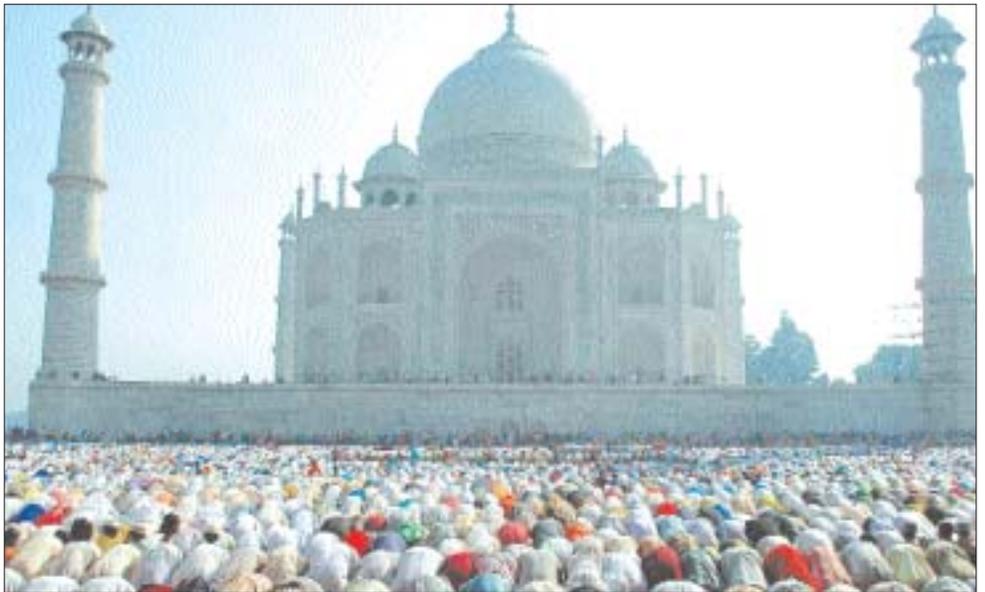
Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated in India with traditional gaiety on October 24 and 25, subject to the sighting of the new moon. Thousands of Muslims dressed in new clothes thronged the Jama Masjid in Delhi and several other mosques in the national capital on October 24 morning and offered special prayers (*namaaz*).

The joyous occasion of Eid ul-Fitr marks the end of Ramzan. It is a celebration of piety, forgiveness, brotherhood and love. A day of thanksgiving for the strength, discipline and piety earned through the month of fasting gone by. On this holy day, Muslims visit friends and family and exchange greetings.

The President, the Vice President and Prime Minister wished the countrymen on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Greeting the people, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam wished the celebrations would inspire people to follow the path of love and compassion. In his message, the President said: "Eid-ul-Fitr brings joy and happiness to the people on the culmination of the month of holy Ramadan, a period of fasting, prayer and charity."

Extending his best wishes to all Indians in the country and abroad, Kalam said: "May this year's Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations strengthen mutual goodwill and inspire each one of us to follow the path of love and compassion."

In his message to the nation, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Eid brings to the fore the noble instincts in people. "Eid-ul-Fitr evokes feelings of brotherhood, compassion and sharing in all and strengthens the pluralistic bonds of our composite society," he said. "May Eid-ul-Fitr usher in peace, prosperity and happiness for all," he added.



Eid-ul-Fitr *namaaz* being offered by thousands of devout at the famous Taj Mahal in Agra on October 24.

Chants of "Allah ho Akbar" resonated in the narrow lanes of Delhi's old quarters from the loudspeakers of the Jama Masjid. Excitement filled the streets, which wore a festive look throughout the one-month period, as soon as the Eid moon sighting was announced on October 23. The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Ahmed Bukhari confirmed on October 23 that Eid would be celebrated on October 24. The markets in the walled city remained abuzz with activity hours after midnight.

"We got up early in the morning and offered *namaaz* at Jama Masjid as has been the tradition for generations," said Arif Mohammed, a resident of Old Delhi. Special prayers were also held at several Idgahs across the capital. People hugged friends and relatives and exchanged greetings and gifts.

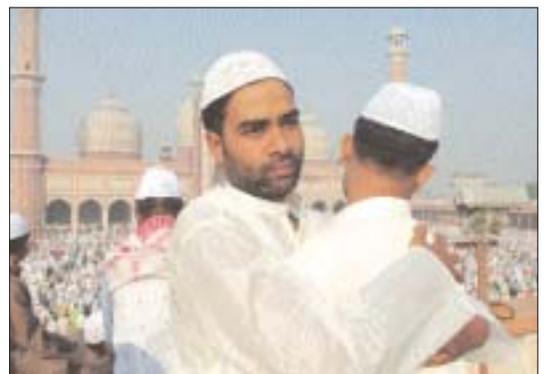
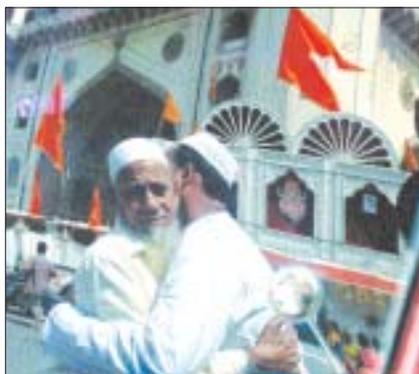
Eid-ul-Fitr is known as a festival of sweets

and eats. Markets, especially in Old Delhi, had an array of traditional delicacies on display. Traditional preparations like *seviyan*, or vermicelli, and *phirmi* are popular during this festive season. "My wife has made special *seviyan* for the occasion, plus other delicacies. We had several guests at our house," said Mohammed. Many Muslims also took to acts of charity on the auspicious occasion.

In Andhra Pradesh, Eid was celebrated on October 25 in traditional way with *seviyan*, new clothes and hundreds of thousands of people offering prayers at mosques.

Scenes of communal harmony were witnessed in many parts of the country, with non-Muslims exchanging greetings with their Muslim brethren. People visited houses of relatives and friends on the occasion and were treated to the famous *sher khorma*, a sweet made of *seviyan*, milk and dry fruits. ■

■ Countrywide Celebration of Eid



From left: Eid-ul-Fitr *namaaz* being offered in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir; scenes of brotherhood in Hyderabad and outside the Jama Masjid in Delhi.