**Eid al-Fitr**

This year’s Eid al-Fitr— a widely celebrated Muslim festival, will likely fall on May 3. Based on the lunar calendar, Eid al-Fitr is commemorated after the end of the Holy month of Ramadan when Muslims fast from sunrise till sunset, thus, Eid al-Fitr is also known as the ‘Festival of Breaking Fast.’ Many people observe the festival by visiting friends and family, exchanging gifts, and making special food and sweets that are synonymous with the festival itself. In many South Asian countries like Pakistan and India, elders of the community give gifts of money to the children, which are known as ‘Eidi.’ Other cultural traditions also see Muslims going for special morning prayer on the day of Eid. Once the prayer ends, all Muslims in the congregation, be it a stranger or friend, exchange Eid greetings by hugging each other.

## History of Eid al-Fitr:

Eid al-Fitr’s day changes every year according to the Islamic calendar, which depends on lunar cycles. Every year, the day shifts by at least a 10-day margin, falling earlier and earlier. This year’s Eid al-Fitr will most likely fall on May 3. In any case, the occasion is loved worldwide by the Muslim community and it is celebrated for three days. After a month of fasting and abstinence, Muslims celebrate the festival with much fanfare. It is also a day when ‘Zakat,’ a compulsory form of charity for Muslims who can afford it, is paid. Zakat, which amounts to 2.5% of the gross net of a Muslim household, is given to the less fortunate in society. ‘Fitrana’ is another form of charity that is also given during this time, and this type of charity aims to rectify any accidental mistakes a person may have made while fasting.

Many countries celebrate Eid al-Fitr according to their specific cultures and traditions. In the Middle East, people offer morning prayers by going to a specially designated area called ‘Eid-gah’. Eid-gah is usually a vast empty space. Unlike other Muslim prayers, Eid morning prayers do not have a special call for prayer. In other countries, like Malaysia and Pakistan, people visit their families and friends, taking along gifts and special food items. These countries’ traditions also see people making special food dishes like ‘sheer khurma’ and ‘sawaiyan’ on the morning of Eid. These sweet items are made with vermicelli, milk, sugar, and dry fruits. South Asians also refer to Eid al-Fitr as ‘choti’ Eid, meaning the smaller Eid. There are two Eid festivals in Islam; Eid al-Adha is considered the ‘bigger’ festival as it commemorates the end of the Hajj pilgrimage with the sacrifice of animals like sheep, goats, cows, and camels.