

Prayers for Eid al-Adha

LI Muslims, by the thousands, mark a holy day

BY BART JONES
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Several thousand Muslims packed the Mitchel Athletic Complex in Uniondale on Tuesday morning to celebrate one of the holiest days of the year in Islam.

The faithful were marking the start of the three-day festival of Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice. It falls at the end of the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia that all Muslims are required to make at least once in their lifetimes if they are physically and financially able to do so.

"It's festive and it's humbling because we start our day with prayer," said Faisal Zakaria, 44, chief application officer at NYU Winthrop Hospital in Mineola. "It all comes back to God."

Similar services took place at more than two dozen mosques throughout Long Island, which is home to an estimated 80,000 Muslims.

The Mitchel park event was organized by leaders of the Islamic Center of Long Island in Westbury, which was not large enough to accommodate the huge crowd, said Isma Chaudhry, president of the mosque.

The faithful lined up in long rows on plastic tarps and carpets placed on the floor of the athletic complex, which normally serves as an indoor field for soccer and other sports.

The prayer service attracted politicians, including Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, who said Muslims are becoming an increasingly important part of Nassau County socially, economically and politically.

Farrah Mozawalla, director of the Asian American Advisory Board of Nassau County, said, "For our community, which is a marginalized community, to make them feel like they are accepted is so important."

Zakaria, like many of the faithful, said he had a full day of festivities planned after the prayer service, including a special brunch, lunch and dinner



The Muslim faithful doff their shoes Tuesday morning before entering the Mitchel Athletic Complex in Uniondale. It's Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest times of the year, and adherents celebrate with festive meals after morning prayers.

with relatives and friends.

"It's going to be insane," he said.

On Monday night, his family exchanged gifts, another Eid tradition, similar to Christmas Eve for Christians, he said.

His 5-year-old son got everything on his wish list, including a 500-piece LEGO set and a train track, Zakaria said.

The faithful came to the prayer service dressed in elegant traditional clothing, some of it imported from overseas.

Rizwan Qureshi, 62, a banker from East Meadow, said the service was a great event in part because it brought together Muslims from all over Long Island.

"The most important thing is we all get together as a community . . . and celebrate at one place," he said.



The faithful believe that Eid al-Adha commemorates the biblical patriarch Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, at God's command. Abraham did not kill his son, as God spared the boy. Instead, Abraham sacrificed a ram.

During the festival, many Muslims have an animal, usually a lamb or goat, slaughtered. They usually distribute one-third of the meat to the poor and another third to relatives and friends. They keep the final third for themselves.

**LI counties
get \$320G
for storms**

BY ROBERT BRODSKY
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Nassau and Suffolk counties will receive nearly \$320,000 in state Homeland Security grants to upgrade their 911 response and emergency service dispatch operations, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced this week.

The funding announcement comes as Long Island officials begin to prepare for the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June through October.

Cuomo announced that 57 counties and New York City would receive \$10 million through the 2018-19 Public Safety Answering Points Operations grant, which allows counties to upgrade their public safety call-taking and dispatching technology.

Suffolk will receive \$173,668 to offset costs to its 911 call center, while Nassau will get \$145,826, officials said. The formula-based grant is dependent on population, operations and emergency service calls.

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said her administration had learned a number of lessons from super-storm Sandy, which struck the region nearly six years ago. "The good news is we have made great progress in the past six years," she said.

For example, Nassau now has contracts with disaster management contractors and consultants to assist with debris removal and disposal after a storm, Curran said.

The county Office of Emergency Management, she said, has procured 50 portable traffic lights and 100 generators, traffic cameras to monitor flooding conditions and a new warning system to notify residents about emergencies.

Suffolk, meanwhile, has expanded its notification capabilities, improved its weather forecasting models and updated its emergency management and hazard mitigation response plans, officials said.

"Suffolk County is continuously implementing best practices to ensure safety during devastating storms," County Executive Steve Bellone said.