

Chinese Muslims celebrate annual Corban festival

At around 8:30 a.m. on Friday, hundreds of Muslims performed a prayer ritual at a mosque in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, to observe Eid al-Adha, known in China as Corban Festival, one of Islam's most important holidays.

They shook hands and wished each other well. After the prayers, some rushed to home to prepare the feast, while others visited markets around the mosque, buying deserts and fruit.

Corban Festival is a feast of sacrifice during which people slay livestock to share with their family or visit relatives and friends to send best wishes.

In Ningxia, Ma Tiangui, 65, an ethnic Hui, purchased a lamb a few days ago.

"My children and grandchildren return home for the festival, so I must prepare various delicacies for them," said Ma.

In the city of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Guzelnir Memet received lamb from the residential community and made stewed mutton.

In order to help poor families celebrate the festival, the local government has allocated more than 3 million yuan (around 460,000 U.S. dollars) to provide each of the city's 18,025 households living below the poverty line with 3 kg of lamb.

The festival is also celebrated by Muslims in other northwestern provinces such as Gansu, Qinghai and Shaanxi. China has more than 20 million Muslims, mainly Uygur, Hui, Kazakh, Uzbek and Tajik ethnic minorities, living in various regions.

Muslims in Ningxia, Xinjiang and Gansu enjoy a five-day holiday for the festival.

During the holiday, vehicles with seven or less seats are exempt from highway tolls in Ningxia.

Ma Xiaolong, a resident of Zhangjiachuan Hui Autonomous County in Gansu, slaughtered a lamb and offered it to poor elderly neighbours.

"I plan to travel with my family to Beijing by high speed train this year," said Ma. "They had never taken this new form of transport."