

GATHERING, FEASTS PART OF FAMILY'S EID AL-FTR CELEBRATION

FESTIVITY MARKS THE END OF THE FASTING MONTH

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It was early morning in the Malik's home.

The Milton family of five - father Fwad, mother Lubna and their children Raheel, Hamza, and Safeera (all share the same last name), along with the visiting grandparents from Ottawa - was getting ready to start their Eid al-Ftr celebration to mark the end of Ramadan.

"It is made for celebration," Malik said. "There's a lot of build-up to it because we've been fasting for 30 days every day."

Growing up in Bahrain in the Middle East - though he's originally from Pakistan - he says the festivities

there can go for multiple days, unlike in Canada. Malik wants to make sure that their children understand that Eid is "not just another day."

"It means a lot to us. And especially for our children, we want (them to experience) the tradition that we've always followed and the excitement that we have for Eid," he said, likening it to Christmas.

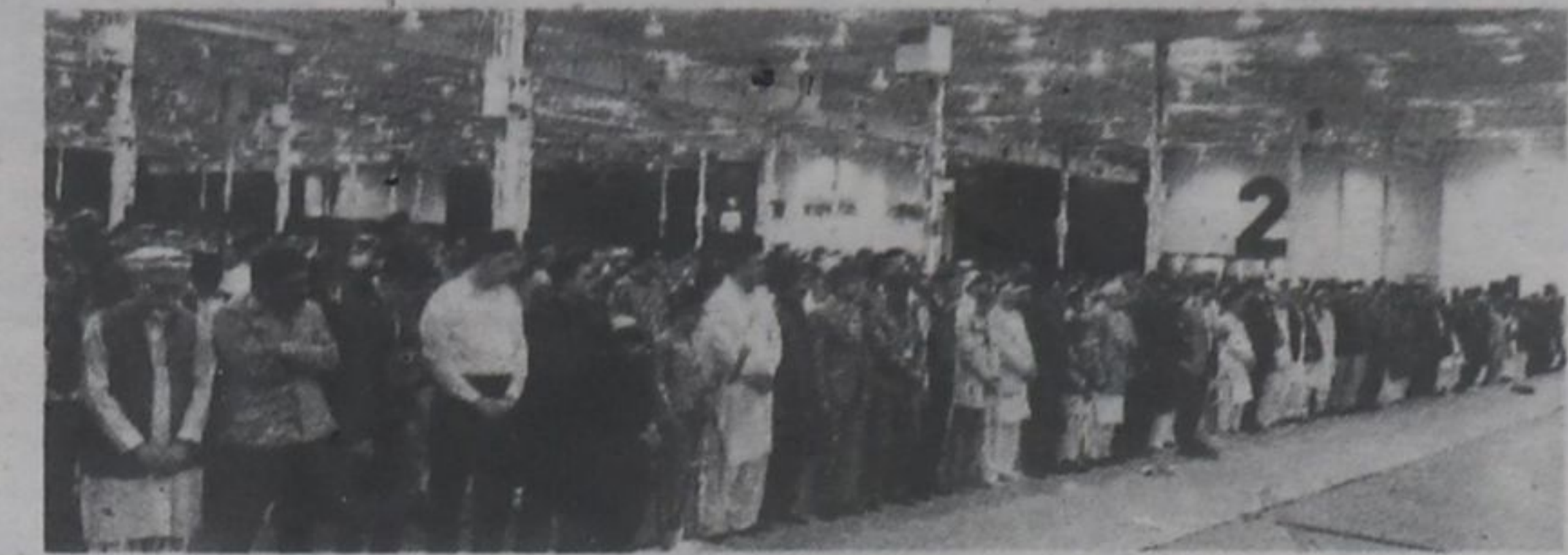
In addition to giving gifts or money to young family members, Eid is also a day to "eat good food."

As is tradition in the Pakistani culture, the family has prepared a sweet dish called saiviya or vermicelli in milk, usually enjoyed in the morning and also as dessert.

In the spirit of community building, they'd also usually share the sweet concoction, which is best served when it's warm, with their neighbours.



Bambang Sadewo photos/Torstar
Fwad Malik and Lubna Malik, above, with children (L-R) Raheel, Safeera and Hamza shared their excitement for the celebration of Eid-al-Ftr. Above right: The Eid-al-Ftr prayer held in one of the halls at the International Centre in Mississauga was attended by thousands of people.



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"Thousands of people will be there," he said. "It's nice that there's a central location (to meet) your friends, your family, all the people that you haven't met for maybe months. So that's exciting."

It's just the start of what's bound to be "a busy day" visiting relatives and catching up with them. In the coming days, they also plan to check up on those new to the country that may not have any family members, as well as the elderly and the sick.

"It's a time for us to count our blessings and

what we have," Malik said.

This was echoed by Magbool Sheikh.

As families get together and enjoy feasts, Sheikh, director of advocacy with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, says Muslims are expected to continue doing the good things that they learn during the month of fasting and help people who are less fortunate.

"There's people out there that don't have that luxury. It's a reminder to give to folks and help provide for food banks," he said.

"Don't take things for granted."



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