

Hajj goes high-tech for bloodless Eid sacrifices

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Thanks to computer technology and SMS messaging, Muslims at the annual hajj pilgrimage to Mecca were able Monday to make their Eid al-Adha sacrifice without getting blood on their hands.

The more than 1.8 million pilgrims from around the world participating in the hajj had the option of computerised coupons to order a sacrifice on the Muslim holidays marking the end of the hajj—without even seeing the beast.

Many among the world's more than 1.5 billion Muslims themselves pick up a knife and kill [sheep](#) or other animals to mark the Al-Adha feast, Islam's holiest.

"If each pilgrim himself sacrificed a sheep, there wouldn't be enough space," said Rabie Saleh, a Sudanese in line at a Saudi post office at Mina's Jamarat Bridge, where pilgrims symbolically

stoned the devil in the last major hajj rite.

The Eid al-Adha ritual commemorates Prophet Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, before he was replaced by a lamb, and symbolises the believers' submission to God.

The meat is shared out, especially among the needy.

The hajj to Islam's holiest sites, housed in western Saudi Arabia, is one of the five pillars of the religion that capable Muslims must perform at least once.

Over the centuries, when performing hajj meant an arduous desert journey, pilgrims themselves sacrificed animals before handing meat to the poor.

"But now there are millions of pilgrims. If each sacrificed a sheep, that would take days and days," said Mishal Qahtani, 33, a Saudi pilgrim.

So the Islamic Development Bank, based in the nearby Red Sea city of Jeddah, devised the electronic coupon system.

For 460 riyals (\$123) this year, agencies located around holy sites visited by the [pilgrims](#) take charge of the sacrifice.

"As soon as someone buys from us, a request is sent to the Islamic Bank through our system and a sheep is slaughtered in an abattoir," explained Mansour al-Malki, 45, a postal worker.

The meat is then cut up and handed out to the less fortunate in the Mecca area or sent overseas, Malki said.

"Before, there were paper coupons but now it's computerised," Malki said.

Qahtani received a receipt showing he had paid for the sacrifice.

"They told me that I will soon get an SMS to tell me that a sheep has really been slaughtered," Qahtani said.

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