A glimpse of adivasi life

PHOTO : SAYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Food, handicrafts, household items, music and dance were the attractions at the indigenous cultural festival.

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"Weave our hearts together with a thousand colourful threads" -- with this slogan a three-day indigenous cultural festival was held recently at Bangladesh-China friendship Convention Centre. Organised by Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTD), the festival featured handicrafts, traditional attire, food and cultural programmes featuring diverse music and dance by different ethnic groups.

The festival was open to all and generated much enthusiasm among Dhakaiites who had an opportunity to have a glimpse of the lifestyle and culture of the indigenous groups living in both the hilly and plain lands of Bangladesh. A total of 14 ethnic groups including Chakma, Marma, Tanchangya, Garo (Mandi), Tripura, Malo, Khyang and others participated at the festival with a range of their products. Handmade household items, earrings, bracelets, anklets, beaded necklaces, dolls, toys and more attracted a visitors young and old. But the highlight was hand-woven colourful clothes and shawls decorated with traditional ethnic motifs. Bengali women were looking for "thami" -- a flamboyant garb. The foodies had their source of entertainment at stalls offering ethnic dishes including rice cakes.

The cultural programme included traditional "Biju/bihu" (a dance celebrating the new year), "Jhum" (dance celebrating 'jhum' cultivation and harvest -- one of the most important aspects of Chakma lifestyle), "Bottle dance", "War dance" display or martial arts and more. Khumi artistes performed the festival's theme dance. A group of Manipuri dancers presented the famed "Rash Nritya" -- featuring the "leela" of Sri Krishna. They also performed a dance with the rhythm of "mridanga". Mridanga is frequently played at Manipuri festivals and celebrations.

The cultural programme also included solo and chorus songs by artistes of different ethnic groups. On the second day of the festival, a vibrant fashion show featuring indigenous clothing and a concert were held at the Mirpur indoor stadium. Artistes performed a fusion of popular Bangla and indigenous music at the concert. The closing ceremony was held at the Hall of Fame, Bangladesh-China Friendship Convention Centre on December 2.