



Kite vendors are busy at work, a week before the festivities start for Shakrain. The traditional festival of the old town is keeping the neighbourhood busy, with preparations going on at full swing.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Dhaka gears up for Shakrain

DIPAN NANDY

Shakrain -- a festival most awaited in the neighbourhoods of the old town. Only a week is left, but the excitement is in the air of the "Puran Dhaka" alleys.

Shakrain is now not limited to the residents of Old Dhaka. It has become a festival for all the people of the capital, and even outside.

Like every year, the festival will be observed this year on January 14 and 15, to celebrate Makar Sankranti.

According to locals, eating pithas, made with new rice, and flying kites on the occasion are an age-old tradition.

With the passage of time, the festivities have changed as well. On

the day of the festival, kites start flying above roofs of neighbourhoods, amid the morning mist. As the day progresses, the festivities take on new colours. The afternoon ends with a game of kite flying amidst the winter air, while the night sky is illuminated with fireworks and lanterns in the evening.

"Buro-Buri" puja will be held in temples on the afternoon of the festival as well.

Preparations for the festival were seen in Shankharibazar, Tantibazar, Laxmibazar, Narinda, Sutrapur and Lalbagh areas of Old Dhaka on Thursday. Kites and natai (kite reels) are also being sold at small neighbourhood shops.

Many have started a seasonal business of selling kites.

Asked if festivities would be any different due to the Covid situation, Hossain Adnan, who came to Shankharibazar to buy kites, said the risk of infection is lower as they celebrate the festival on the rooftops and among themselves.

According to the shopkeepers, kites of different designs and shapes, including Chokhadar, Pandar, Kathadar, Maladar, Pankhiraj, Chalandar, Petidar, Pandar, Prajapati, Dapas, Batur and Chil are available.

Ordinary kites are sold for Tk 5 to 25 depending on the shape. Foreign kites of different designs cost Tk 150 to 600.

A thousand yards of Manja yarn from India or China costs Tk 150. However, the more you get, the less you pay.

Mohan Sur, proprietor of Sur Ghurighar in Shankharibazar, said sales are lower this time than before Covid times. But with a week left to go for the festival, sales may increase. Although prices are the same as before, due to the low number of buyers, the natis are being sold for a lower profits this time around, he said.

For the second time, DSCC is also organising the festival. The standing committee on sports and culture of the organisation will hold the festival across all wards. The inauguration event will be held at Lalbagh Kella.

98pc of Kalyanpur's water retention land grabbed

Says LGRD minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 98 percent land meant for water retention in the capital's Kalyanpur area has been grabbed to construct various establishments, said LGRD Minister Tazul Islam yesterday.

"A total of 173 acres of land in the Kalyanpur area is kept for water retention. Except for some 3.5 acres, all houses and buildings of the area have been built by grabbing retention areas," he said.

The minister said they have given directives to DNCC to evict the grabbers. He said this while addressing the biennial meeting of Cumilla Journalist Forum Dhaka at Jatiya Press club.

Tazul said the cabinet has finalised the Detailed Area Plan, which is awaiting gazette notification. He said they will amend structures of the city corporation, municipality, and union, upazila and zila parishads to strengthen local government institutions.

2 killed in road accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were killed, while two were injured, in road accidents in Dhaka over the last two days.

A motorcyclist was killed and a pillion passenger injured after a truck hit their motorbike on a flyover at Jurain rail gate early yesterday. This injured driver Shakil (19) from Patuakhali. The injured is his friend Zahid (18).

Shakil was declared dead at DMCH, said SI Md Nuruzzaman of Shyampur Police Station.

Meanwhile, a ride-sharing motorcyclist was killed and his passenger injured in a head-on collision with a fuel tanker at Amulia in Demra on Thursday night. The deceased -- Humayun (34) -- was from Mir Hajirbagh area, said Inspector Md Bacchu Miah, in-charge of DMCH police outpost.

PRAYER
TIMING
JAN 8



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



As part of the Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad's two-day 10th triennial council, a cultural event was held at the Institute of Engineers in Dhaka yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'THE TIME IS NOW'

Minority leaders call for separate ministry, national commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different religious and ethnic community leaders yesterday demanded that the government create a separate ministry and national commission for the country's minority communities.

They said the government needs to formulate separate laws to protect people of those communities and end discrimination against them.

They placed the demands at the inaugural session of Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad's two-day 10th triennial council, held at the capital's Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh. A new committee of the parishad is expected to be announced at a session today.

Minority leaders said the government needs to properly implement Vested Property Return Act-2001 and CHT Accord-1997, and make CHT Land Commission functional. They also demanded a separate land commission for ethnic people living in the plains.

In his written speech, advocate

Rana Dasgupta, the parishad's general secretary and International Crimes Tribunal prosecutor, said ensuring the wellbeing of people belonging to different religious and ethnic communities has become a challenge in present-day Bangladesh.

He said a secular, democratic, and discrimination-free Bangladesh, as dreamt by Bangabandhu, will not be established without going back to the 1972 constitution.

"Fulfilling such pledge is the call of time now," he added.

At present, the country's rights situation is worrisome, and equity has not been established yet, said veteran left-leaning politician Pankaj Bhattacharya, also chairman of the council preparation committee.

Former chairman of National Human Rights Commission Prof Mizanur Rahman said minorities still have to raise their voices for rights, 50 years after the independence.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, who joined

the session virtually, said at one end, there are discussions on the country's development, while at the other, minorities are facing discrimination.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu said it is the state's duty to ensure safety for every citizen. The government should be held responsible for failing to protect minorities.

Eminent economist Debapriya Bhattacharya said at one end Bangladesh is targeting to become a middle-income country and expressing desire to become a developed nation.

However, there has been disruption in ensuring people's equal rights, he said.

AL Office Secretary Biplab Barua said the prime minister has ensured rights of the country's religious and ethnic communities.

Columnist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury joined the programme virtually. Politician Mujahidul Islam Selim, and lawmakers Shameem Haider Patwary, Aroma Dutta and Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvondary also spoke at the programme.

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