



A sky full of colours and lights -- such was the view at the age-old Shakraim festival of Old Dhaka yesterday. Traditionally observed as a kite-flying festival on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, new elements like fireworks, light shows and concerts have made their way to the festival of colours over the years. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

To the sky and beyond

Kites, colours and music fill up celebrations at Shakraim

DIPAN NANDY

If you looked at Old Dhaka's sky yesterday, your eyes would surely get blinded by the sheer amount of colours, with thousands of kites flying in motion. Kites were flown from every rooftop of the area. The sky might be the limit for these kites, but the joy was beyond any such limits.

Yesterday was the first day of the Bangla month of Magh, marking the day of the age-old Shakraim festival on the occasion of Makar Sankranti. Shakraim, the kite-flying festival, dates back to the

Nawabi period. Fast-forward to twenty-first century's Dhaka, the festival has only become bigger.

This correspondent visited Old Dhaka's Shankharibazar, Laxmibazar, Nayabazar, Sutrapur, Dayaganj, Gandaria, Narinda, Banglabazar, Sadarghat areas yesterday. The traditional Shakraim festival started with a riot of colours in the sky, accompanied by fireworks, music and delicious food.

The main attraction of the festival are the kite fights. Kites are flown with the help of a "manja" yarn. A kite can be cut any time with the help of the yarn.

"Vokatta!" cheers everyone as soon as someone cuts another's kite.

The kites also come in different names and shapes. Chokhadar, Pandar, Kathadar, Maladar, Pankhiraj, Chalandar, Petidar, Pandar, Prajapati, Dapas, Batur, Chil, names as majestic as the sight they create.

The doors to Old Dhaka are open to thousands of people from outside the old town, who come to join and witness the celebrations themselves.

Dipok Dev, a service-holder and resident of Modhubagh area, talked to this correspondent about his experience

with the festival this year. "I've never seen so many kites together in my entire life," he said.

"I'll attend the festival next year as well. And I'll share my experience with my friends."

The festival, in recent years, is attended by many foreign nationals as well.

"I had no idea about Shakraim before coming here. It was great to come here and see the kites and fireworks," said Raija, who came all the way from Finland.

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'Pay annual increments as per law'

Demand trade union leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Shramik Sanghati (BGSS) yesterday demanded that workers at different industrial areas, including export processing zones, be paid with equal annual increments on due time.

During a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 15

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:00	5:36	7:00
JAMAAAT 6:05	1:15	4:15	5:40	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Passengers yet to be sold on Nagar Paribahan

Blame slow speed, long queues at counters

UNB, Dhaka

Although commuters travelling by the red-and-green buses of Dhaka Nagar Paribahan (DNP), currently in its pilot phase since launching late last year, have expressed their satisfaction with its services so far, the DNP is yet to attract a sizeable crowd.

Those who did ride on the bus said they like it for its disciplined service and reasonable fare, along with the ease in buying tickets and designated bus stops.

But despite this quality service delivery, the buses were still found running at less-than capacity. Their common complaints include the buses being too slow, which means the queues get longer at the designated stops.

This drives many of these passengers to take the otherwise rough-driving, higher fare-charging bus services, simply because they can make them reach their

destinations faster.

Drivers, conductors and helpers of the service have expressed their woes over the matter. "It is disappointing for us as we are providing the promised better services," said Karim, a conductor.

One passenger, private service-holder Jafar Alam, said the low number of vehicles from the service is failing to meet the demand, which is why the queues are long at bus stops. "The wait is almost unbearable during office time, but I still take it because of the quality of its service."

He also said he only pays around half the amount compared to other bus services. "I pay Tk 21 for the same trip that private companies charge Tk 40 for."

Another regular passenger, retail shop-owner Rafsan Khan said he too likes the service but is wary of its lag. "I think it can get more passengers if it uses the Mayor

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These banners and posters were put up in front of Jatiya Party's central office on Pioneer Road in Kakrail, to mark the party's 36th founding anniversary. However, some two weeks after that day, the banners were still found to be there, ruining the area's beauty and dangling dangerously among electric, telephone and internet wires. This photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Acorn Woodpeckers



Acorn woodpecker and cavities to deposit acorns, California. PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

During a visit to California last year, a friend and I went birding. Early one morning we headed to Rancho San Antonio, a wilderness area in Silicon Valley. In a previous life I had lived in this area and had hiked often in this sprawling nature park. However, that was before I became interested in birds. This hike was a new experience as the focus of the walk was very different: I tried to find hints and clues to where the birds might be.

Along the way my friend pointed out various places where he had seen birds of interest: a California Quail on that meadow, a Red-tailed Hawk up on this tree, and so on. However, as we walked we saw little of interest. On this crisp sunny California fall day all the birds had decided to be elsewhere.

After hiking about a mile, we came across a small homestead "farm" with some animals, a barn and a cottage. In front was a small water tap

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GULSHAN 2

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