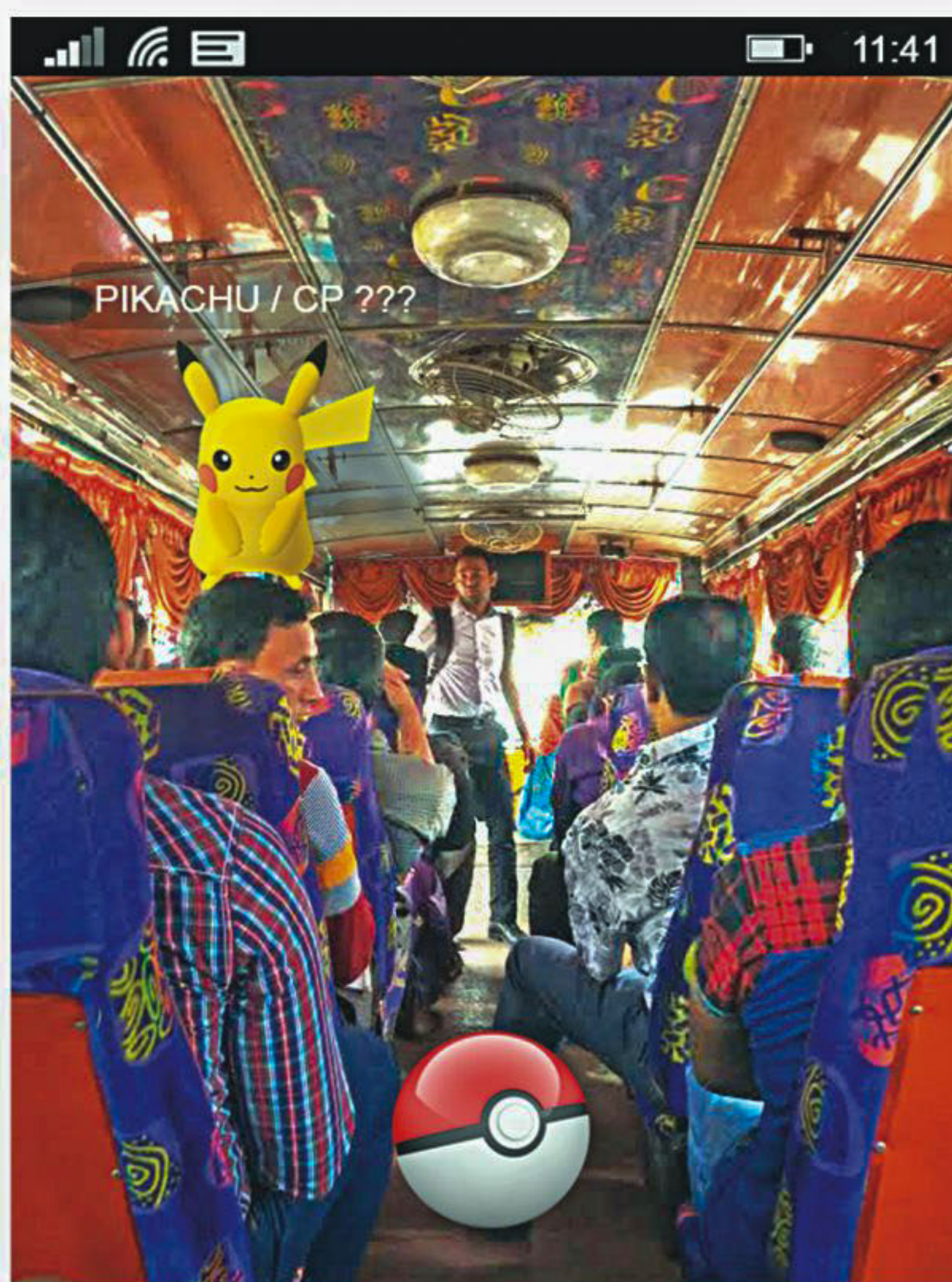# It's 2019
I'll still be playing Pokémon GO

NUREN IFTEKHAR

If you have been walking around the wondrous streets of Dhaka this year only to bump into a careless deviant with a phone in his hand and his mind somewhere else, then I'm afraid that individual might have been me. Before you launch into a barrage of scathing criticism, I want you to hear my story.

When Pokemon GO released in 2016, it got people into a frenzy and Bangladesh was not spared from that hype. A community built up around it from the start with people hitting the streets in order to "catch 'em all". So many people used to gather up around Charukola each day that they had to put up a sign banning all the Pokemon GO players in their premises. However, the game with its enormous popularity, hit a rough patch (read crater) and the hype around it slowly started to fizzle. Many old players left and new players were rare.

So that brings us to the next topic. Why am I, a fully functional adult, playing this game now in 2018? Why do I not plan to stop soon? And the answer is as simple as it gets. It's fun.

Surprisingly, the community around this game is stronger now than ever before. Due to updates and changes over the past year, Pokemon GO is now more community-centric. People are gathering up in real life to take on raids and events. Every day you will find people going on raids together in your nearest vicinity if you are in the local Pokemon GO community. I have fond memories of going out in my pajamas to meet a friend near a Pokemon gym to take down some raid boss. But it does not stop there. We now have community days, when people walk around for 3 hours in particular areas in order to maximise their haul. And during those three

hours, you walk around with other trainers, who just like you, have not yet given up on the game.

But what is it like playing the game in 2018 and what reactions do I get? Well, you do get scoffed at a lot. "Why are you still playing that in 2018?" is probably the reac-

tion I get most. Some people do get intrigued by the idea. It's usually more intense when I'm on the bus. I have recorded a 90 percent 'head-turn rate' when I play Pokemon GO on the commute. However that statistic might not mean much since if you ever bring out your phone in a public commute in Bangladesh people would stare inadvertently. People's intrigue takes on a new level when it comes to raiding as it involves a good number of people standing around in a circle tapping their screens furiously. But it takes more than a few scoffs and sneers to stop us from catching a Mewtwo. To further add to the impressive additions to the game, Niantic went ahead and implemented the much awaited 'Player vs. Player' battle system. While it does not add the complexities of the main line Pokémon titles and retains the same old 'Tap till they faint' formula, the various types and the addition of a third move does make things interesting.

Pokemon GO is in a better state at the moment than it ever was before. The Bangladeshi community around the game is active and as helpful as it gets. The introduction of player-vs-player spiced things up as well. For Nintendo Switch owners, the game is even more incentivised as the integration with the Pokemon Let's Go titles is something not to miss out on. If you can get over the "People still play that game?" look that you might get once in a while, you would be rewarded with a fulfilling experience and an active community to be a part of. And if you're one of the people giving the "People still play that game?" look I just want you to know, IT'S FUN. OKAY?

Nuren Iftekhar is a crusty old man who likes fiction, indie games and every flavor of waffles. He scoffs at pop-culture references but can do a mean floss. Send him raccoon pics at n.iftekhar18@gmail.com