



#CULTURE

The Korean story of Bangladesh

We are touched by Korean influences perhaps in more ways than we can imagine. From electronics to entertainment, and from business to food, Koreans have made their mark in Bangladesh and the world at large.

Bangladesh is not exactly a very cosmopolitan country. Despite that — on one hand, there is an impressive Korean community here, and on the other, we have come to embrace K-wave, the global phenomenon of the rising popularity of Korean culture.

And so there is a Korean story of Bangladesh that needs to be told!

The community

Some sources say that there are around 1600 Koreans in our country, with the majority living in the capital. The community may seem small, but its contribution isn't. The Republic of Korea is a large investor in Bangladesh, and most of the Koreans here are businesspeople and their families.

Some of them have been here since the

early 1980s, and one of the chief areas of their investment has been the RMG sector, says LEE Jang-keun, the ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh.

It was a time when the RMG sector — that would eventually be hailed as one of the strongest pillars of our economy — was still in its infancy. “So there lies the role of Koreans. They came at a very early stage and started their business and they grew together with the Bangladesh RMG sector,” he stated.

This is not to say that RMG is the only



[From left to right] Tashnuva Zahan (Founder), Saiful Islam (President), and Tina Zahan (Co-founder) of BD K-Family.

area where Korean businesses operate in our country. Construction is another noteworthy example.

Anyway, Bangladesh is the home away home for the Koreans working here. “Many Koreans have been here for very long. It's not just ‘several years.’ Even 10 years is short for them. Many have been here for more than 30 years,” the ambassador continued,



At the Korean Film and Tourism Festival 2021: Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh, Chairman of Korean Community in Bangladesh, and the Co-founders and President of BD K-Family.

adding that choosing to stay in Bangladesh with families for such long periods of time mean that they must be quite satisfied, with their business, but beyond that as well.

The fact that the Korean Community in Bangladesh had been established in around mid-1980s is a testament to this long and ongoing presence. Its current chairman, Yong Oh Yu, has been in the country for more than three decades. “We work towards strengthening the relationship between Bangladesh and the Republic of Korea, and promote Korean culture in Bangladesh, and also Bangladeshi culture to Korea,” he said.

Not just cultural activities, though, the association also heavily engages in philanthropic and charitable works.

Having lived here for long, Yu holds Bangladesh close to his heart. “There may be many differences between the two cultures, but there are similarities too, especially when it comes to the importance of family and family values. Emotionally, we are all similar,” he opined.

The K-wave

It's now been a few years since we first grooved to Gangnam Style. On the other hand, the band BTS rose to incredible popularity and has become a craze across the globe. The Oscar-winning movie Parasite brought Korean cinema to new heights. Squid Game became a monumental success.

These comprise of just the tip of the iceberg. Korean wave is much more than that. It is not just about the fandom of K-pop, but an aggregate of a wide array of Korean cultural aspects and influences, from cuisine to cosmetics to of course entertainment, be it movies or the so-called K-drama, which arguably has emerged as a genre in its own right.

Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, has seen its share of this phenomenal K-wave, with an ever-growing fandom and several clubs and organisations celebrating it.

BD K-Family, established in 2010, has seen the Bangladesh chapter of K-wave grow throughout the years.

Things started casually enough for BD K-Family. “Initially, we were just a small group of people interested in Korean culture and entertainment as a hobby, and got together to discuss and share Korean food, K-pop, and K-drama,” Tashnuva Zahan, the founder, states.

The smaller meet-ups eventually turned into bigger gatherings as the number of people grew, and eventually, those gatherings became large-scale events to cater to the huge population of K-wave enthusiasts.

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