

Are cosplays and conventions losing their charm?

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In recent years, the youth of Bangladesh have become enthralled with East Asian and Western pop cultures, giving rise to cosplays and conventions. Many people cosplay as their favourite characters for these conventions, which allows them to showcase their love for the cultures through their creativity. Cosplaying brings people together regardless of age, gender, or identity. It allows them to be part of a tight-knit community that uplifts and supports each other's creative endeavours.

From barely having one comic convention per year at the start of the last decade to now having multiple ones annually, the Comic-Con scene in Bangladesh has come quite far. From cosplay competitions, merchandise stalls, singing, art, and dance performances, to delectable food – they have it all.

But while the fascination for pop culture has overtaken the youth in Bangladesh, the events catered to these interests haven't always been able to keep up with the rising demand.

Naqib Haidar, who goes by the username "Ch4rcoal Cosplays" online, shares, "I started attending cons casually in 2017 and only recently started cosplaying and competing in the events. I'd say both sides are fun but in their own different way. If you go casually, you can explore the entire event, have fun hanging out with your friends, and take pictures with some amazing cosplayers. But attending as a competitor is a whole other experience. The whole exploring part sometimes



gets discarded depending on what you are cosplaying and dealing with heavy props and elaborate costumes in crowded conventions can become quite tricky."

However, not everyone has a support system that allows them to attend these events. It's hard to explain the allure of conventions to parents who didn't grow up attending such events. On the other hand, cosplay as a hobby tends to get quite expensive. Although some people are masters at crafting cosplay outfits on a budget, the cost of quality materials can often rack up costs to the thousands.

As the community keeps growing, more and more peo-

ple are getting interested in attending these events, resulting in overcrowded environments. Since the conventions are open to the public, crowd control becomes quite difficult, causing some unwanted problems. Participating in these conventions can also be quite stressful and overwhelming for people with social anxiety.

Naqib Haidar further comments, "I've noticed that there's unfortunately still a lack of awareness about decency and tact among the general pop culture consumers. Because of the sheer amount of people attending these cons, cosplayers can often get harassed or bullied just for some clout. To fix part of this issue, some conventions have recently raised their ticket prices and started selling fewer tickets, making the events more exclusive so that the crowd is smaller and can be managed better."

Llama Xin, a veteran cosplayer shares, "I used to enjoy attending conventions before, but now they're just too overcrowded, there's no proper venti-

lating tight knit; for the most part, everyone seems to know each other. So, when any problem or issue arises, they tend to share it with one another and help fix it together.

However, uncomfortable situations still manage to occur, as Barnil Shaptarshee adds, "While I enjoy cosplaying and attending conventions because of the supportive community and creative freedom, it can get quite uncomfortable at times because people don't always understand boundaries. Sometimes people will touch me inappropriately without consent and forget that underneath my cosplay, I'm a real person with real feelings too. There's also the constant harassment and bullying I face on the internet being someone who likes to cosplay as female characters. I've often found that people don't take me seriously and it's frustrating and makes me feel left out."

At the end of the day, cosplaying is a hobby that allows people to geek out about their interests, bring their fantasies to life, and share their passion for pop culture with fellow fans. The love for different cultures is what brings these people together, despite their differences, and it is that shared interest that keeps them coming back for more.

The cosplay community in Bangladesh is rel-



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