

main stage of both **Capcom Cup 11** and **10**, the official **Street Fighter 6** tournament, shared a similar view: "I believe esports being primarily hosted on platforms like Twitch and YouTube significantly helps its growth," pointing to global accessibility and inclusiveness as the main strengths.

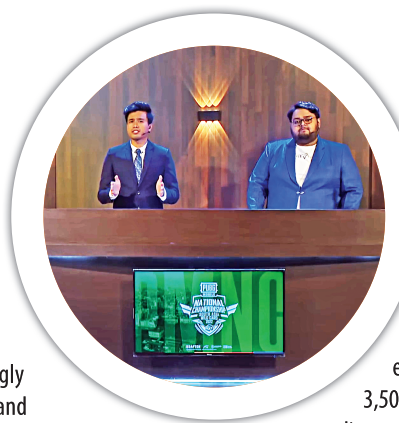
Samiha echoed this sentiment: "Twitch, Facebook, and YouTube are where our audience is at. That's where we connect, build friendships, and grow our community." She added, "Traditional sports have their place, but esports belong online. It's faster, more engaging, and way more personal. Anyone can stream, watch, or compete; you don't need anything fancy. Just your passion."

Abdullah offered a broader perspective, particularly a timeline of esports' sudden growth: "Online platforms are certainly contributing to the growth of esports' reach. The popularity reached a peak during Covid-19, but then suffered a slight decline in 2022–23. In 2024–25, we have observed

free apps, a practice that is perfectly aligned with modern consumption habits.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL MOMENTUM

Governments and institutions are increasingly recognising the cultural and economic impact of esports. Saudi Arabia's US\$38 billion investment in gaming and its partnership with the International Olympic Committee to launch the **Olympic Esports Games** in 2027 are major milestones. Similar international examples can be seen with 2022's **Commonwealth Esports Championship** in Birmingham, where 12 nations competed in **Dota 2**, **eFootball**, and **Rocket League**, with the next edition to be held in Glasgow in 2026. Esports was also officially included as a medal event at the



day, with 3,400 teams of five players each, totalling 17,000 participants. He also points out that the **Discovery One Cup Season 2**, held in September 2023, was the country's largest offline esports event to date, featuring 3,500 players in total and a sold-out audience of 5,000.

However, despite the immense popularity of esports in the country, challenges remain. "Esports needs to be officially sanctioned by Bangladesh's sports authorities to unlock access to public venues, funding, and legitimacy," said Zonaed. He advocated for more inter-university tournaments and greater media coverage to nurture local talent.

On a similar note, Anik pointed out that improving infrastructure and accessibility, increasing tournament frequency and prize pools, boosting sponsorships and investments, as well as enhancing visibility and media coverage, are all necessary for esports to further thrive in the country.

When asked about what the local esports scene can do to make big tournaments more popular, Samiha emphasised community support: "In Bangladesh, we're still catching up with the rest of the world, but the community is growing fast. It's exciting to see more players, especially girls, stepping up."

Samiha added, "We need structure, support, and a mindset shift. Tournaments should be more regular, better organised, and inclusive. If we really want to see Bangladeshi teams on an international stage, we've got to lift each other up."

ESPORTS: THE ENTERTAINMENT SPECTACLE OF OUR TIMES

At its core, esports is about people - players, fans, commentators, and creators - united by a shared passion. What sets it apart is its unique fusion of competition, storytelling, and technological innovation, all wrapped in an immersive entertainment package that resonates with a digital-first audience.

As prize pools grow, production values soar, and stadiums fill up, esports has established itself as a spectacle to rival traditional sports and entertainment. Whether on a smartphone screen or under the glow of arena lights, esports captures the imagination of millions.

With global milestones like the **Olympic Esports Games** and rising local initiatives, the spectacle is only getting bigger. And for the millions who log in, cheer on, and dream of competing, the game is just getting started.

By Shams Rashid Tonmoy
Photos: Courtesy



exponential growth."

Additionally, the online world has democratised esports viewership and participation, breaking through time zones, languages, and even political and geographical barriers. "One thing esports does better than traditional sports is breaking down boundaries," said Abdullah, "In last year's **PUBG World Cup**, there was a team with both a Russian and a Ukrainian player, at a time when their countries are at war."

"In esports, as long as you play well and respect your platform and teammates, your personal background takes a back seat," Abdullah added. Furthermore, in places where TV licensing is restrictive, fans simply tune in through mobile data or

2022 **Asian Games** in Hangzhou, after its debut as a demonstration sport in 2018.

In Bangladesh, while the esports ecosystem is still developing, it is rapidly gaining traction. Both mobile and computer-based esports skyrocketed during pandemic lockdowns, especially with wider 4G access in the country. "Even big brands are now talking about capitalising on a game like **PUBG**, which has about millions of players in this country," said Abdullah. He attributed the most recent surge to the lifting of **PUBG Mobile's** national ban and the launch of the **PUBG Mobile National Championship Bangladesh** (PMNC) 2025 tournament.

According to Abdullah, the **PMNC 2025** attracted 2.5 lakh peak online viewers on the final