Everything you need to know about the Bangladeshi multiplayer FPS Zero Hour

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Game development in Bangladesh has come a long way. In half a decade, we went from Hatirjheel Dream Begins to Zero Hour, a multiplayer online game devolved by two indigenous game studios. We sat down with Nayeem Bin Haasan, director of Attrito, to get an idea of what to expect from their upcoming game.

What is it?
Zero Hour an online team-based tactical FPS jointly devolved by M7 Productions and Attrito. Players will battle each other as part of 5v5 teams in a variety of locations, all in Bangladesh. One team will consist of the law enforcers from the fictional MS Unit-9, whose job will be to rescue the hostage and defuse the bomb. The other team, the terrorists, has to stop them from doing so.

So it's a clone of Counter Six: Global Siege?
Not quite. Unlike the other games in the genre, Zero Hour puts a lot more focus on stealth, planning, and coordination. Your typical run and gun play style won't work, nor can you just blow a hole in the walls. The gameplay is more reminiscent to the 2005 SWAT 4 multiplayer, or if you

played it on singleplayer only, the bank robbery level. The defenders can place the hostage in a room of their choice and have to defend him for a set period of time. To win, the assaulting team either has to either eliminate all the defenders or defuse the hostage's bomb vest before the timer runs out. The attackers have multiple vectors of approach and can plan their advance before the match starts.

How do I play?
The attacking team will have a variety of ways to approach the situation, while the defending team will have a similar number of options to deter them. All the floors in the building are scaleable, meaning the attackers can sneak up with a few floors with their rappel guns and hit the defenders from an unexpected approach. On the other hand, the defenders can place surveillance cameras on undefended corridors and can lay explosive traps. For an added challenge, either side can kill all power in the building, bringing visibility down to almost zero. Loadout management also plays a critical role, as players will have the choice to "steal" the loadout of a downed player, with the stolen loadout being carried over to the next round.

Free to play?
No, there will a fixed price. The developers are yet to disclose the official price but are confident it will be "very affordable". There are currently no plans to introduce microtransactions, meaning users only have to worry about a one-time payment. Something that is frankly, a refreshing change from the never-ending microtransaction found in other AAA games of similar genera.

Who's making this?
The game is currently being made by a small team of 33. Despite being a small team and having access to the Unity warehouse, the team claims to have developed all their asset in-house. An impressive achievement, considering the sheer amount of asset flips typically found on Steam. The team is also working on another game, named Agontuk, a sci-fi open-world game set in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

When can I play it?
The game is scheduled to come on Steam out next month. It is currently on closed beta and interested folks can check the game out on twitch.tv, as several of the testers are steaming their gameplay.

Designed to divide

"There is a high possibility that from the lack of interactive learning, students will slowly lose motivation to learn and their education will only revolve around meeting due dates for assignments," said Bipasha Majumder, a teacher at Capstone School Dhaka.

Light at the end of the tunnel
In the midst of unavoidable inconveniences as online education fails to overcome connectivity issues and technological limitations, some universities are trying to make the model as inclusive as possible.

BRAC University recently launched an online learning platform 'buX' - which will enable Brac students to learn wherever they are, whatever their internet connectivity is, and make learning interactive and lively, according to a press release.

"We recognized the issues with online learning in the Spring 2020 session, and have thus implemented this industrial, high-grade solution," said Vice Chancellor of Brac University, Professor Vincent Chang.

"Part of buX's functionality is to enable online learning even with haphazard connectivity. To make learning feasible for students with poor internet connectivity, we have been working to find proper solutions. These include internet packs and broadband solutions in some cases. In necessary cases, the university will provide hardware for the most at-risk students", he added.

Platforms like buX may address the issues regarding the lags but it is important to consider such options as a viable solution for the long run as well. The policymakers have reportedly identified and addressed these issues, assuring implementations to be underway.

"After considering all factors and speaking with teachers and students of both public and private universities, we are working so that all kinds of institutions can run under a unique online education policy for the long run in Bangladesh," said Professor Dil Afroza, a former teacher of BUET, leading the committee to formulate the Online Education Learning Policy in an interview with New Age.

Bangladesh University of Professionals has promised to facilitate the students with technical support who are suffering from financial distress while many private universities have waived tuition fees for all.

However, students from public universities are yet to be included in the narrative of transforming education. The anxiety of falling behind and session jam due to classes being halted and the resumption without technological readiness has raised concerns among the students.

Despite promising developments in a handful of institutions, the bigger picture continues to paint a grim palette with a larger section of students being left out of the containment measures. With no foreseeable end to the pandemic in sight, the looming question is still left unanswered; "What now?"