

## Is mobile gaming in Bangladesh READY FOR THE NEXT LEVEL?

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that way, and people were making friends outside of their usual friend groups. Many were building connections internationally. The mobile community was growing bigger and stronger, and the best part in all this is that Bangladeshi gamers are a part of this community.

As the community grew bigger, and competitions became a regular event, professional mobile gaming became a thing in Bangladesh. PC and console gaming dominated the gaming scene while competitive mobile gaming started to gain popularity.

"While there are many professional gamers abroad, this is still a new concept in our country. In the past few years, mobile e-sports has created many jobs in Bangladesh, starting from the players to the people in the background such as casters, tournament organisers, and much more. Games like PUBG Mobile, Free Fire, and recently, Arena of Valor have invested into the Bangladeshi e-sports scene, making it the best time to take up gaming as a profession. There are some hiccups on the road, but I believe professional gaming can get a massive boost if our government can help," explains Babus Salam Turjo, Head of Media and PR at MercenarieZ, a top Bangladeshi e-sports organisation. Mobile gaming, competitive or professional, has far-reaching impacts on the social lives of young gamers. However, this impact has never felt more evident than during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"During the pandemic, as schools and colleges were closed, young people who love to play online games got involved with local gaming communities and made new friends and gaming partners. As a result, online gaming communities are getting bigger every day. It's a good thing because young people can now connect with more likeminded people through these communities, that too from their homes," shares Aliur Rahman Sohan, gaming content creator and Head of Business, Global at Zenetic Esports.

With classes and workplaces going virtual during the lockdowns, the internet became the only medium of



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communication for people. Online communication via platforms like Zoom or Google Meet was mostly boring. People would only log into these platforms for academic or work purposes. The younger generations found a way to escape that monotony. And they did so with mobile gaming and the communication facilities those games provided them.

"I would start a game of PUBG Mobile with two or three of my other friends, and we would start talking about random stuff," says Abdullah, recent graduate from a private university in Dhaka. "Some days we would share jokes or funny memories that we shared together, while

on other days we talk on the more serious things going on with our lives."

As the popularity of mobile gaming increased in Bangladesh, players began to expect more from smartphones. Both the occasional and competitive players are always looking forward to smartphones with high-end specs which, at the same time, will not hurt their wallets.

"To be honest, if manufacturers asked me to spend BDT 50,000 on a smartphone, just because I could play games on it, I would not consider it," says Abdullah. "I could just spend that money on a new laptop or desktop, and that would be a better value for that amount of

money. However, if gaming smartphones were between BDT 20,000 and BDT 30,000, I would perhaps think about buying one."

Elsewhere, the recent rise of professional mobile gaming has created a stir in the mobile phone market as well. Phone manufacturers are launching models targeting the gaming communities, making them a part of the conversation.

"We have noticed that our young consumers look at two factors when they purchase a phone: entertainment, and gaming. They want the latest features and specifications in an affordable price range. When a young person walks in our store to try out one of our phones, they naturally gravitate towards playing a game. As a result, we work with gaming groups and make it a point to ensure our communication strategies and ideas resonate with those who are passionate about mobile gaming," shares Rezwanal Hoque, CEO of Transsion Bangladesh, which offers the iTel, Infinix and TECNO brand of mobile phones.

Having said all that, it will be interesting to see how mobile phone companies respond to the growing demands of their users, while trying to maintain a balance in their pricing.

It will also be interesting to see how mobile game developers respond to such demands. When it comes to innovating with smartphones, the world is moving at a very fast pace. We might soon see mainstream mobile manufacturers shifting their primary focus towards AR/VR technology. What can game developers do to tackle that shift?

All these questions are yet to be answered. However, from what the past years tell us, it is highly unlikely that we will be disappointed with what lies ahead.

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