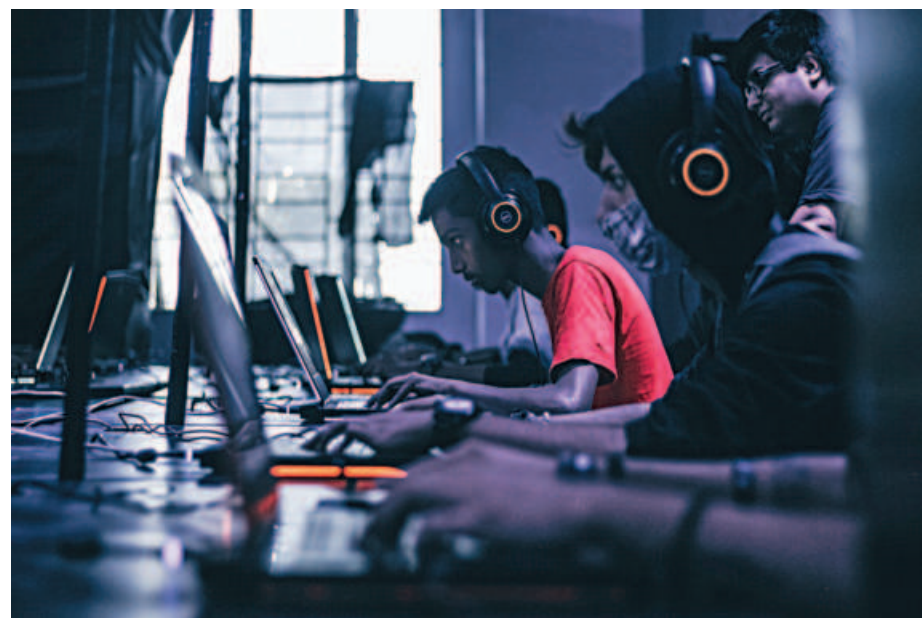


Local esports events to keep an eye on

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Gaming, an indispensable part of the lives of many, is chosen by countless young adults around the globe as their primary source of a dopamine rush. To fuel that fire, we have competitive esports gaming, a world abuzz with adrenaline and passion. Something about the word 'competitive' always sparks a drive in people to outdo, be it a staring contest or a major sporting event. Sports are not the only medium to pitch one player against another, the virtual gaming world has long made large-scale competition its home. Since Atari's first-ever major esports tournament back in 1978, a plethora of games has ridden the wave of esports, including classics like Doom and Quake to household names like Counter-Strike and Valorant.



Prize pool: BDT 6 lac
Games: VALORANT, COD Mobile
Discovery One recently made headlines by hosting some of the biggest esports LAN events in Bangladesh, among which are FIFA Royale and the D1 Cup boasting a more-than-generous prize pool of BDT 15 lacs, with an astonishing 9 lacs reserved for the champion. Discovery One has now returned with yet another iteration of their online competition series, Bangladesh Esports League Episode

Much like the outside world, Bangladesh equally shares a love for gaming and competition. Since the early 2000s, Counter-Strike 1.6 and DOTA have been taking centre stage in Bangladesh as the lone titles in any e-sporting events, but over the last decade, that catalogue has appended titles like FIFA, Rainbow Six Siege, and Call of Duty. But surprisingly, what has gained an unprecedented level of traction is the mobile gaming scenario. Thanks to the advent of powerful handheld devices, competitive mobile gaming is now a fully-fledged branch of esports. The last few years have seen the titanic rise of games like PUBG, Free Fire and Call of Duty Mobile.

With such an unprecedented rise in gaming and player bases growing almost exponentially, skill ceilings for each game are at an all-time high, which only means one thing: more competition. Thanks to this rising phenomenon, esports is gradually being taken more seriously. Each event boasts a higher prize pool than the last, making this the perfect time to utilise those lightning-speed reaction times and jump in on the action yourself, whether it be desktop or mobile. If you want to dab your feet into the wild world of competitive gaming, here are some upcoming local esports events to keep a close eye on.

BESL Episode V by Discovery One

V, an event that has featured titles like CSGO and Mobile Legends. Last month's Episode IV garnered over 1.5 million views across all platforms. Keep your eyes glued to their Facebook page for BESL's LAN event counterpart D1 Cup Season 2 announcement, which has an even higher prize pool. This time around, BESL is featuring Valorant and COD Mobile. The register closed on June 14.

For future events, keep an eye on their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/discoveryonebd/

IGE Community Series Valorant 2023
Prize pool: BDT 50,000

Games: VALORANT

InGame Esports is a company that is trying to bring esports gaming to the forefront not only in Bangladesh but in the whole South-Asian subcontinent as a whole, with very frequent international tournaments being hosted online. Their tournaments have featured all the fan favourites starting from PUBG to DOTA 2. This time around, it's on LAN and it's more joy for the fans of Valorant, with more and more events to compete in. With 119 registered teams competing for a prize pool of BDT 50,000, the tournament will take place from June 17 to 24.

Keep an eye on their website for future events: <https://ingame.gg/events>

SMART BANGLADESH GAMING FAIR 2023

Prize pool: BDT 49,000

Games: FIFA, VALORANT

For the people assuming only gamers in Dhaka can band together and compete, you have been proved wrong. The three-day offline event 'SMART Bangladesh Gaming Fair' gave gamers of Chattogram the chance to show off their skills in Valorant and FIFA. Moreover, it doubled as a PC peripherals showcase event, which is all the more pleasant for tech lovers and gamers alike. The prize pool for FIFA was BDT 9000 and for Valorant, it was BDT 40,000. The Gaming Fair took place at the GEC Convention Center in Chattogram from June 14 to 16.

For future gaming tournaments in Chattogram, keep an eye on: www.facebook.com/TeamECO.bd

Inter-University LAN Tournament by Mobile Legends Bangladesh

Prize pool: BDT 4 lac

Games: Mobile Legends

Mobile Legends Bangladesh, the leading mobile esports organiser in Bangladesh, is set to host major esports events in the coming months. One of the events, the Inter-University LAN tournament, will be an offline tournament featuring the Mobile Legends (MLBB). As many people worldwide are choosing esports gaming as their career path, Mobile Legends Bangladesh hopes that tournaments

like this will inspire university students to give serious thought to choosing esports gaming as their future career. The tournament has a big prize pool including in-game rewards worth BDT 4 lac and they're planning to include more than 20 universities through their LAN tournament. The tournament will be open to all university students in Bangladesh and the registration will be opening soon on their official page. Link to the official group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/235030881883343/>

Esports Tournament at Dhaka Summer Con

Prize pool: BDT 50,000

Games: Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB)

Similar to the esports segment of the Anime Convention, Dhaka Summer Convention also has a segment for the esports players of Bangladesh. There will be squad vs squad and solo 1v1 games to compete against each other for mobile games like Mobile Legends, with a lucrative amount of prize pool. In the Anime Convention, the Champion of the Mobile Legends tournament was Red Viperz Gaming who recently became the first Bangladeshi team to get the chance to play in the World Esports Championship Regional Qualifier.

The success of our teams is inspiring the esports organisers to bring more tournaments and opportunities for our community players. Keep an eye on their event page for team registration and updates. Link to their event page: <https://www.facebook.com/dhakasummercon>

GPxAOV Community Cup 2023

Prize pool: BDT 3 lac

Games: Arena of Valor (AOV)

GPxAOV is back with its second season of the highly anticipated Arena of Valor tournament. Season 1, which happened last year, was a great success with hundreds of participants from around the country competing for the grand prize. With the success of the first season, fans of the game can't wait to see what Season 2 has in store. GPxAOV is known for its well-organised tournaments and has built a reputation as one of the best organisers in the Arena of Valor community. The tournament is open to players regardless of their gaming experience. This diversity adds to the excitement of the tournament as players from different districts and different playstyles go head-to-head. Season 2 promises to be even bigger and better than the first. There are more prizes up for grabs, including cash prizes, and new rules have been put in place to ensure a level playing field for all participants. GPxAOV has also made sure to address any issues that came up during Season 1, making the second season even smoother and more enjoyable.

Are we ready to listen?

Exploring the prospect of a podcast platform in Bangladesh

MEHNAZ IRTIKA



In a world progressively leaning towards digital content, podcasts have been capturing the imaginations of millions worldwide with their diverse and immersive experiences. As this trend sweeps across continents, it raises an essential question for countries like our nation which are burgeoning with digital potential: Is Bangladesh ready for a podcast platform?

According to recent statistics, podcast listenership has witnessed an astounding surge, with over 155 million people tuning in regularly in the United States alone. Moreover, countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and India have witnessed a remarkable surge in podcast popularity, with millions of avid listeners engaging with diverse topics and narratives.

Inspired by this global wave, Bangladesh stands poised to explore the realm of podcasting. Let's venture into the nascent podcasting landscape of Bangladesh, and discover the local take on this flourishing medium waiting to be heard by the world.

CHARTING A NEW ERA: JOURNEY INTO THE PODCASTING LANDSCAPE
As of 2023, there are approximately 464.7 million podcast listeners globally. This number is projected to reach 504.9 million by 2024, creating a broad spectrum of opportunities for local content creators. In Bangladesh, podcasting is gradually gaining momentum, offering a unique platform for local voices and stories. It's fair to assert that our nation is now ready to dip its toes into the waters of the audio landscape.

Paving the way for podcasting
Podcasts are a steady mix of entertainment and education - they're not just fun; they're fuel for thought. And with our favourite celebrities and influencers lending their voices to the medium, it's hard not to be swept up in the excitement. Trailblazers are emerging to pave the way for the growth of a podcast platform in Bangladesh in the ever-evolving realm of podcasting alongside enthusiastic listeners. These individuals are instrumental in establishing a thriving community that embraces the captivating medium of podcasts.

Enayet Chowdhury from the Trinomial podcast delves deeper into the reasons behind the growing interest among listeners and emphasises the importance of creating personalised content. According to him, the future of podcasting in Bangladesh looks

promising. "I believe that the podcasting landscape in Bangladesh will likely see a diversification of content across various genres and subjects," he states. Sameer Ahmed, the face of SameerScane, who is also experienced in behind-the-scenes work for podcasts like '2 Cents', says, "Bangladesh is completely ready for a podcast platform, with an array of digestible, authentic content from creators."

Evidently, podcasts provide an escape, a moment of reflection, or a spark of inspiration, whenever and wherever we choose. But they're more than just background noise. Podcasts connect us - to ideas, to stories, and each other.

Navigating the challenges and opportunities
In the ever-changing world of podcasting, navigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities has become paramount. Yahia Amin, a psychologist and podcaster, acknowledges the momentum of podcasting but also emphasises the existing challenges. He further highlights the role language and content preferences play in the popularity of podcasts in Bangladesh.

As creators and listeners embrace this dynamic medium, it's crucial to understand what people are looking for; quality content, use of local language, and resonating relativity. Sameer argues that podcasts are convenient and offer a more genuine medium for creators. "With podcasts, you can tell stories, foster collaboration, and delve into the nitty-gritty of helping people gain knowledge," he says.

To facilitate the growth of podcasting, creating a network or community of podcasters and listeners, organising meetups and workshops, and exploring various revenue streams will heighten the

chances of audio content taking off in our nation.

Ascent of monetisation in podcasts
As more individuals seek engaging audio content on various topics, the rise of podcasts creates an immersive experience. The prospect of earning hundreds of dollars per podcast adds an intriguing financial angle to the equation. According to a report by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and PwC, podcast ad revenue in the United States in 2023 is expected to total \$2.3 billion, marking a substantial increase from previous years. This indicates the growing interest of advertisers in reaching engaged podcast audiences.

The Trinomial Podcast earned about Tk. 53,000 (with 3,67,900 views, 92,200 watch hours, and 2,900 subscribers) only from YouTube monetisation in April without any sponsors, making monetary prospects open for exploration. Enayet highlights, "Advertisers and brands will recognise the potential of reaching engaged and niche audiences through podcast advertising" - which presents monetary offers for creators.

The current scenario suggests that the expanding podcasting landscape and increasing listenership provides amazing opportunities for content creators to monetise their podcasts. Yahia Amin outlines, "As Bangladeshi podcast networks and platforms continue to grow, they may introduce new monetisation features like premium subscription" - suggesting that the future of podcasting in Bangladesh could pave the way for lucrative financial feasibility.

Insights from within

The promising rise of podcasting in Bangladesh isn't merely catching the attention of entrepreneurs and content creators but also has sparked

excitement among the audience, particularly the youth. To capture this, we turn our spotlight to Labiba, a Brac University student, and Anjum, a local entrepreneur.

Labiba argues, "Will people be willing to shift from visual to audio?" She states that the beauty of video content is "the completeness of sensory experience it offers". However, she believes that the podcast format can bring an unmatched personalisation, and this unique charm could be its winning edge. On the other side of the coin, Anjum sees the budding podcast platform as a potential gold mine. "The growth in listenership worldwide shows the immense potential for monetisation," he exclaims.

We're at the cusp of a major shift in content consumption, as there are advertising opportunities, sponsorships, and even direct listener support options. Podcasts allow for a deeper connection with the audience, which can translate into a stronger willingness to support content creators.

Future of podcasting
Imagine the bustling streets of Dhaka to the serenity of the countryside, brought to life by the vivid narratives of homegrown podcasters, their voices weaving a rich tapestry of Bangladeshi culture and experience. Picture the intimate conversations unfolding in millions of ears, building personal connections and breaking down barriers of understanding.

A future illuminated by the glow of potential, the hum of anticipation, and the undeniable charm of the spoken word can be seen over the horizon. Podcasting in Bangladesh is finally ready to cast off its underdog status and step confidently into the limelight.

From airwaves to earbuds: We're ready
Given the current state of podcast adoption and the potential solutions at hand, it appears Bangladesh is on the cusp of a podcast boom. By fostering a spirit of collaboration, embracing innovation, and nurturing a culture of experimentation, the seeds for podcast growth are planted.

With proactive initiatives such as local content growth and strategic planning like forging partnerships for infrastructure improvement, podcasts are the next big fish in the pond of digital content. As Bangladesh eagerly tunes in, the whispers of a forthcoming podcast revolution resonate through the air, promising a transformative wave of audio storytelling and knowledge sharing.