



These images provided by Sony Computer Entertainment, LLC shows scenes with creatures and locations from the video game, "No Man's Sky." — AP photos

'NO MAN'S SKY' REACHING TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

GAME INDUSTRY'S BEST KEPT SECRET RELEASES ON 21ST JUNE

LOS ANGELES: "No Man's Sky" creator Sean Murray wants everyone in the world to know that his galaxy simulator isn't merely a ridiculously ambitious idea that's wowed crowds at the Electronic Entertainment Expo. It's actually a video game. "I think people really like the concept, but it's very important for me to deliver on that," said the Hello Games co-founder during a recent trip to Los Angeles to show off "No Man's Sky."

While the virtual environments in most games are meticulously crafted by artists and designers, "No Man's Sky" transports players to a fictional sci-fi galaxy populated by an almost infinite number of planets - each with their own ecology - that are generated by a PlayStation 4 or PC using mathematical

With its breathtaking vastness, colorful art style recalling classic sci-fi novel covers and moody score provided by electronic-rock band 65daysofstatic, "No Man's Sky" captured the gaming industry's attention in 2014 when it was first teased at the Spike Video Game Awards and E3.

18 quintillion planets to explore

The game, which is scheduled for release June 21, doesn't feature a traditional narrative. Instead, there's lore players can uncover when interacting and learning languages from alien races scattered across an estimated 18 quintillion - that's 18 billion billion - planets. "It's not like a typical video game," said Murray. "You don't start off in prison, then someone throws you a gun and you have to rescue your dad or something. It's about

down players who cause too much mayhem, such as breaking into alien factories to steal blueprints or killing too many dinosaur-like creatures.

"They're these self-replicating drones that were put there by this ancient forerunner race that did it with good intentions to protect planets," said Murray. "They're gotten a little bit out of control. It's questionable in the game whether they're good guys or bad guys." The way in which time passes in the "No Man's Sky" is also determined by developers' algorithms because planets uniquely rotate, resulting in different day and night cycles.

"We display a 24-hour clock right now, which shouldn't be there," said a visibly conflicted Murray. "Every time I've tried to change that, it just breaks people's brains." The game's randomness means that even Murray, who helped build a new engine to create "No Man's Sky," is still surprised by what he discovers when landing his spaceship on new planets.

"I was showing someone the game, and we came across this stilted creature that looked like a zombie T-rex," said Murray. "I screamed to the person, 'Go move closer to it! It's quite fun that I cannot know my own game.'" Despite the seemingly endless structure of "No Man's Sky," Murray suggested it does have a natural conclusion: reaching the center of the universe.

"It seems really daunting, but you will be able to upgrade your ship to fly further and further in each jump that you make," said Murray. The landmark is illustrated on the game's galactic map by a bright light that can be glimpsed past an array of tiny dots, which each represent different solar systems. "When you reach the center, there's a reason why you would want to keep playing, but for most people, that's probably the point they'll put down the pad," said Murray. "It will probably take hundreds and hundreds of hours." — AP



rules devised by Murray and his Guildford, England-based indie studio. It's "Minecraft" meets "The Martian."

"When we set out to make the game, we wanted people to have this emotion, like they're landing on a planet and feeling like no one has ever been there before," said the lanky Irish-born, Australian-raised developer as he demonstrated the game with an almost permanent grin.

finding these places and becoming more engrossed in them."

For instance, players can record a planet's lifeforms and upload them to earn the game's currency. Or they can shoot 'em with a laser gun. "You can be a good citizen of the universe or you can be a jerk, a space jerk," said Murray. "It's up to you." However, it's not consequence-free gameplay. There's an intergalactic force called Sentinels who will sometimes hunt

FACEBOOK SET TO PAY MORE BRITISH TAX AFTER CRITICISM

LONDON: Social media giant Facebook, which has been under fire in Britain for its tax arrangements, said yesterday it will stop routing its British sales through Ireland - a practice that had kept its UK tax bill extremely low.

Facebook, Amazon and other multinationals have been criticized for using complex tax arrangements in Europe to drastically reduce their bills. Facebook said in a statement that from April, "UK sales made directly by our UK team will be booked in the UK, not Ireland. Facebook UK will then record the revenue from these sales." It said the change would "provide transparency to Facebook's operations in the UK"

Facebook paid just 4,327 pounds (\$6,116) in corporation tax in 2014 in Britain, where it recorded 105 million pounds in revenue. The UK is one of its biggest markets outside the United States. The company did not say how much more tax it would pay under the new arrangements in Britain, where the corporation tax rate is 20 percent of taxable income. Facebook's announcement follows Britain's introduction of a "diverted profits tax" of 25 percent to deter companies from using complex international arrangements to cut their tax bills. — AP

AMAZON UNVEILS DEVICES FOR SMART HOME MARKET

WASHINGTON: Amazon unveiled two devices Thursday in the family of its "Alexa" voice-activated personal assistant, aiming for a bigger foothold in the smart-home market. The US online giant announced it would sell the Amazon Tap, a \$130 voice-activated portable speaker, which connects to Wi-Fi or a mobile hotspot "to play music, read the news, provide weather reports, and even order a pizza."

The second device is called the Echo Dot, a basic \$90 sibling of the original Echo which can control light switches, thermostats and other connected devices by voice command. The Dot will only be made available to customers with existing Amazon devices, and may only be ordered with the voice command, "Alexa, order an Echo Dot."

Amazon launched its effort in 2014 with its Echo speaker, using the same kind of artificial intelligence employed by Apple's Siri, Google Now and Microsoft's Cortana, among others. Internet titans such as Apple and Google are eager to make their platforms into hubs that exploit the powers of smartphones, tablets or other devices to control entertainment, information, temperature, lighting and more in smart homes. The platform could let Amazon jump ahead in that race with the first device in homes that will be listening and ready to act whenever people might think of something they want or need to buy. Amazon has been adding partners to its Alexa platform, including the Spotify streaming music service, which it made a feature of its Fire TV, enabling voice searches for viewers. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: In this Wednesday, March 2, 2016 photo, David Limp, Amazon Senior Vice President of Devices, gestures toward an Amazon Echo in San Francisco. Amazon.com is introducing two devices, the Amazon Tap and Echo Dot, that are designed to amplify the role that its voice-controlled assistant Alexa plays in people's homes and lives. — AP