

SO COOL, YET SO FAR

CC-compliant bikes not sold in Bangladesh

RAHBAR AL HAQ

The motorcyclists in Bangladesh are pretty starved for choice thanks to our 165cc limit. What makes this already bad situation worse is that there are plenty of cool bikes that do fall under the said limit but for one reason or another, not offered by their respective dealers. Here are a few bikes an avid motorhead should consider getting through the grey market, as long as they are willing to pay the premium and do not hope for a robust warranty.

Honda Super Cub C125

Remember that old, Vespa-like Honda everyone used to ride? The bike that made Honda synonymous with motorcycle? Well, Honda still makes that, as it's just as you remember it. The designers of the Honda Super Cub C125 have taken great care to preserve the iconic shape, adding only stubble but necessary changes such as ABS and fuel injection. Its 124.9cc engine won't take you anywhere fast, but speed is not the reason you buy such a bike. Unlike its older sisters, however, the new cub isn't cheap, being priced at a whopping \$3,999. Ouch.



Aprilia Pagani 150

Moving from one Chinese retro to another, we have a reimagined classic track machine. The design of Aprilia Pagani 150 takes cues from the semi-faired sports bike of the '60s and '70s and does a decent job of bringing it to the modern era. The 150cc engine also makes decent power for its size, generating 18 HP and 10 lb-ft of torque. Sadly, Aprilia announced the bike will be exclusive to the Chinese market, so the rest of the world has no choice but to look on longingly and inhale some deep, deep breaths.



Honda ADV 150

Rounding out the list with another one from the red team, we have the Honda ADV 150. Don't let its scooter like apparency fool you, Honda made this to go on rough roads. The engine is shrouded to protect it from outside impact and the 5.1 inches of travel on its twin Showa shocks means it's pretty resistant to being bottomed out. If you're ever going to take a trip to our countryside; this will serve you well through our non-existent roads. That is if Honda bothered to sell it over here.

Yamaha Tricity 155

We have all seen those tricycle scooter conversions. They are crude, badly put together, and will likely flip over if you took a corner a bit too fast or sharp. But people buy them anyway, mainly because they do not know that is a better product out there. Yamaha Tricity is a tricycle whose Leaning Multi-Wheel technology can keep itself upright without any kind of outside support. It also has all the modern necessities such as ABS and LED light as well as a spacious trunk under the seat. But don't mistake this bike as a slow city commuter, because the 2020 model shares its engine with the R15. The 155cc makes 15 HP and 10.33 lb-ft of torque, meaning you can embarrass quite a lot of naked sports owners while commuting to work. Sadly it also shares the pricetag, being offered at around \$4,600



Lifan Hunter 125

Ever wanted a Ducati Scrambler 800 but couldn't because of our cc restriction? Lifan have you covered. The designer of the Hunter too more than few artistic inspirations from the Ducati, such as the trellis frame, tank shape, bench seat, and rear fender. Design is the only similarity the two bikes share though, as the 125cc engine and 14-inch wheels of the Hunter put it in a completely separate segment. On the bright side, the small size means it's also a heck of a lot cheaper, being priced at around \$1,730. Despite having its official debut in 2018, it never saw an official debut in Bangladesh, and now there are even rumor going around that Lifan is to discounted its production. Oh well.



How Covid era freelancers are making money through gigs

ISRAR HASAN

The onslaught of the deadly pandemic has sent the world economy, including ours, into a tailspin, leading to seismic changes that have rendered many people vulnerable and in a quagmire of uncertainty. In the new normal, job security has become a constant lingering question as lay-offs have been normalised, salary cuts have been instrumentalised, and eking out new modes of working have been standardised.

It is not uncommon to see people looking for work on LinkedIn as we see a wide array of people from professionals to graduates to young students to anybody in general who is affected by the pandemic and is willing to make a few bucks to keep things going it were before. In order to offset the changes in income, job security, and uncertainty thrust upon us by the pandemic, many people, regardless of backgrounds and age have taken to freelancing.

Boom from Bust

The pandemic has spurred a freelance boom in which any skill from digital marketing to illustration to ghostwriting to media management to multiple others have been seeing a spike in demand as remote working has replaced the traditional office space. With lay-offs and salary cuts, this provides a lifeline to bring out creativity and synergy to the job market and ensuring a level of unhampered job security. There are a plethora of services and skills for you to choose from. It is important that you work on a specific field and master most of the skills needed to serve in that field. As work becomes digitised and the gig

economy is put on focus, we see people turning to freelance for a more secure stream of income, autonomy, and creating a harmonized work-life balanced which has in many ways been jeopardised by the pandemic.

Bangladesh currently has an estimated 650,000 active freelancers who are working regularly and with the pandemic, countless more have been added, some of whom are working on a part-time basis as well to supplement incomes and widen experiences. While there have been some challenges to freelancing in the pandemic due to payment issues and fall in demand due to a number of factors such as readjustments in the industries and beyond, many young people, including students and graduates, see freelancing as a lifeline of hope.

Nazia Mahmud, a recent graduate, sees "freelancing as the best thing to do amidst the pandemic as it was an escape route from daily tribulations of life in an age of social distancing". Just like Nazia, the class of 2020, is engulfed in a storm of precariousness as future job prospects seem bleak. For someone who had to research and write articles on a varied number of topics, this presented her with a chance to get some work experience in a remote space, which seems to be the new office platform, as well as earn some cash. Either way, building up a CV with an opportunity of honing writing and research skills alongside earning cash seems like a good thing in a time of a socio-economic crisis such as ours.

For those starting out, there are many freelancing platforms for beginners

such as Freelancer, Upwork, Fiverr and to those on top of their game, there is Toptal. With good communication skills, professionalism and government IDs, freelancing is open to anyone to channel their energies to produce work as desired by the clients.

"It is easy to freelance now than it was before due to stronger systems of payment options and more versatility of clients who are willing to see what you do as a chance of proving your worth in the market", remarked Shubhomoy, who works as a head of design in an IT company and dabbles in illustration and website design in his free time. In the pandemic, as work from home has become official, he has more space on his hands to try out what he calls "riskier and challenging projects" that he feels will land him in a "better position in the future as he will have a stronger portfolio".

Breaking down assumptions

Being free agents of choice and masters of their own destiny, freelancing is never seen as a viable social option of employment in Bangladesh. Still, for many people, an ideal job projected onto people is of a doctor, engineer, or businessperson. Freelancing entails a wide variety of skills and many pay well, something many are not aware of.

Reidwanna, a recent graduate who has two and half years of experience freelancing sees freelancing as a tough job with a "stick and carrot policy". If you are not able to keep up your performance, it gets risky to get the next customer. Performance is duly tracked and noticed.

Freelancing is contingent upon experience mainly and patience is a major virtue when starting out.

A major assumption is that all freelancing is done in solitude. This is a false assumption, as collaboration is a frequent feature especially when working in projects with Zoom calls and multiple WhatsApp groups being made. When dealing with website design with a number of people from across the world, Riway, has to attend a late-night meeting in sync with this employer to discuss and make plans for the layout. "We often have to sound off our ideas and meetings often take hours as a group effort is needed otherwise a whole project falls apart", remarked Riway.

While it is true freelancing falls under remote work, freelancers also have to engage in legwork from time to time when it comes to constructing ideas and put them in action. A freelance writer on lifestyle and fashion, Tanisha says, "I often have to go to shops and observe the products, their prices, and qualities before I can go home and pen a piece which would be value for money for my client. Otherwise, I know I would not be able to earn my targeted amount". Sincerity and persuasion remain cornerstones of negotiation when landing good offers for working.

As everyone jumps on the freelancing bandwagon, we will see the emergence of a much robust informal economy as the pandemic plunges us in further anxiety. We might be seeing a malleable and digitization of labour and capital reallocation.