

Balancing Acts

Want to buy into the whole cycling craze that's hot right now in Dhaka? If you know next to nothing about bicycles, here's our definitive guide to the different types of cycles you can indulge on.

Comfort:

Hard-tails and soft-tail MTBs usually have a comfortable ride compared to road bikes. The suspension and wider tires make MTB's go easy on your precious behind.

Speed:

Road bikes are faster by a huge margin. The lighter frame and the frame geometry means more efficiency and less weight, which equals faster bikes.

Efficiency:

Road bikes make more use of the power and the lack of suspension, and this means all the pedalling energy goes to the wheel, making them more efficient than MTBs.

Weight:

The sturdier build of the MTB makes it heavier while the sleek design of the Road Bike means a significant drop in weight, unless you count the weight of the rider, which in most cases will render the road bikes unusable considering the recent obesity epidemic sweeping through our city. Our recommendation? Slim down on MTBs and then move to road bikes.

Handlebars:

Road bikes usually have a drop bar, which means the brake levers and shifters are vertical. MTBs usually come with flat handlebars or handlebars with a slight rise. So if you want to put your girlfriend on the handlebars and pretend you're in a Tamil movie, MTBs are the way to go.

Suspension:

Suspension is one of the key factors that determine which bike you want. Hard-tail MTBs have only front suspension. Dual suspension MTBs are also widely available. Road bikes have rigid forks with no suspensions. While this ensures that all the power gets to the wheels and not to the suspension, it also means a bumpy ride on the pot-holed streets of Dhaka.

Brakes:

Brakes come in either old-fashioned callipers pressing against the rim or modern disc brakes. The latter offer more stopping power. Also pricier. We'd suggest you opt for the latter on whatever bike you get. The stopping quality it provides makes all the difference between life and an unplanned trip to the hedges.

Posture:

Road bikes, due to their drop bars, demands a more aggressive posture on the part of the rider. While this is effective to get power to the drivetrain, the posture takes time to get used to. Mountain bikes on the other hand, you can ride sitting upright. MTBs provide a more relaxed posture, which facilitates Tamil movie scene remakes.

Tires:

The first difference anyone notices between a Road Bike and an MTB is the tire. Notice the wide, knobby tires on the MTB for traction while the Road Bike has slick and smooth tires for more speed.

Fixies:

For the hipsters among us, or enthusiasts of Premium Rush, fixies are available on the market too. The term usually means a single gear cycle without a free-wheel. Most fixies available here have a free-wheel mechanism too. While not for everyone, and not as efficient to ride as cycles with gears, for enthusiasts these colourful things are more fun to ride.

Hybrids:

A cross between the two, this is the way to go if you do not want to sacrifice proper suspension of an MTB for the speed of a road bike. Hybrids have the straight handlebars instead of the more demanding drop bars but uses slicker tires for more speed. Any MTB can be converted into a hybrid by changing the tires to slicks.

MOYUKH MAHTAB



Cracked windshields, empty wallets.

It's going to be hartal season in Dhaka soon, and that means burning cars, buses and lots of broken glass everywhere. We don't have a solution to protecting your car from the attacks (other than installing iron bars over the windows and transforming your daily driver into a post apocalyptic war machine), but we can at least give you peace of mind knowing where and how to get replacement windshields. Actually, peace of mind is a bit of a stretch. Prepare your wallets for torture.

If you belong to the millions of Toyota Corolla owners in Bangladesh, we have good news for you. As with everything Toyota, replacements are cheap and widely available. The relatively newer model Corolla X/G NZEs from 2002-2006 have surprisingly cheap front and rear windshields, going at about 3000 to 4500 taka a piece. For other common post 2002 Toyota cars, like the Allion, Premio, Axio, Probox and Fielder, the prices are pretty much the same, with 500 taka differences in some cases due to stock limitations. For 2005 and above Allions and Premios, however, the prices can go up to as much as 7000 taka, because the later models came with windshield-mounted rear-view mirrors.

Good news for owners of older cars: Corolla AE100 and AE110/111 owners can find replacement front windshields for less than 3000 taka. If you're the family man or have a rent-a-car business, minibuses like the Hiace and Noah have pretty cheap windshields, usually going for 3500 taka for front and 6500 for a full set (front and rear). Older model Noahs have several variations in rear windshield configurations, so depending on the model and grade, add or subtract 500 taka.

Windshields for entry level soft-roaders and small SUVs like the Toyota RAV-4 and Honda CRV are available at somewhere around 4500 taka for fronts, with rear windshields usually being more expensive because of their, uhm, rear-ity. Big luxury off-roaders like the Toyota Land Cruiser Prado and Mitsubishi Pajero have atmospherically high windshield prices, with the original ones priced at around 28,000 taka for just the front. Better not take out the Prado for a drive during hartal violence, then.

Luxury sedans aren't exempt either. Any Toyota Crown or Mark II will set you back at least 12,000 taka for a windshield, newer ones will drain your cash reserves as fast as the 1-GFE engines on early model Crowns drain fuel reserves.

The prices mentioned here are predominantly Toyota, and there's a reason for that. Being a Honda or a Nissan owner in Bangladesh equals a hefty dent on the wallet, and replacement windshields offer no exceptions. Most of the shops here don't have these in stock, which means either importing them or scouring the dark depths of dusty underground warehouses in the hopes of finding a replacement.

As for the shops, you can find a huge row of specialised dealers opposite Rajarbagh Police Lines, near Malibagh. RK Auto Glass (01813855090), JC Auto Glass (01819312289), and Cheora Motors (01556329700) are just three of the smaller shops in the area. They're also friendlier than the bigger shops in the area.

So there you have it. Taping up your cracked windshield and covering the gaping holes with plastic sheets can only take you so far. Go get your new windshield and keep a hockey stick ready for the next person who tries to put a dent on your wallet.

SHAER REAZ

WE ASKED AROUND A LITTLE ABOUT PEOPLE'S PREFERENCES AND HERE'S WHAT WE GOT:

Zawad Hasan Adib

(Uni Student, BDCyclist member whose bike is usually with some other friend)

I prefer a road bike's looks, and its speed. But it has its cons, mainly the constant worry of tyre leaks. Mountain bikes are better for the streets of Dhaka because of the suspension.

Kafil Wara Rafid

(School Student, BDCyclist member and the guy who gets asked the price of his bike on the road the most)

I like road bikes because of their speed. I have one mountain bike and one road bike. For off-road routes mountain bikes are the better choice. I would recommend new cyclists to go for mountain bikes and switch to road bikes after getting used to the streets. It takes a few months to get used to the posture of a road bike. Mountain bikes for beginners make it more fun to ride and it is important to enjoy cycling from the start. Looks wise, road bikes, but when it comes to Dhaka streets, obviously mountain bikes.

Al Amin

(Mechanic at Café Cyclist, Will fix anything on a bike with his biting sarcasm and sometimes a set of Allen Keys.)

For short distances, when there are traffic jams, I prefer mountain bikes. With a road bike, I have to worry about leaks. But because of their speed, I would use a road bike for longer routes, they are faster. For beginners, I would recommend mountain bikes, suspension makes the ride comfortable and it takes time to get used to the sitting posture for road bikes.

GRID 2

Racing games are a dime a dozen nowadays, all of them working off the same basic formula that has been running for years to deliver a virtual driving experience for gamers. Usually these games feel mass produced and marketed to a crowd that rarely knows much about cars other than the obvious: 4 wheels and spoilers look cool on almost anything.

Grid 2 looked VERY promising in its pre-launch buildup. Great cars (the BMW E30 M3 a personal favourite of mine), a long list of promising tracks, and the eye dazzling graphics wowed us, with expectation rising to boiling points for most car enthusiasts who are into playing games.

Now that it's here, though, it feels a little overhyped. The graphics are intensely beautiful, every single car modeled perfectly down to the rear light clusters that occupy our vision most of the time. We like the interior view, especially in simulation games, because it makes us feel like rockstars when we can pilot a million dollar Pagani Zonda around the Nurburgring without a scratch, from the interior view no less. One of the biggest disappointments was the exclusion of the interior view, reducing the effects of the hyper-realism as promised by the developers, pre-launch.

Speaking of hyper-realism (or rather the lack of it), the handling model is okay, but feels a little arcade-y, a deviation from the original Grid game. The cars feel more planted



RATINGS: ● GAMEPLAY: 7.5/10 ● GRAPHICS & SOUND: 8.5/10 ● OVERALL: 8/10

and less twitchy, but around corners, the slides and handbrake induced turns feel like NFS Underground, instead of feeling close to what the masters of simulation racers, Granturismo, can offer us. It's a nice balance of fun and simulation, not necessarily a game aimed at hardcore car enthusiasts but something the general populace would lap up more easily.

The career progression is simple, effective

and rewarding. If you're here to drive some fast cars around iconic tracks, don't be afraid to start off with the career mode, because the cars are unlocked really fast and you start off with a tasty selection of metal anyway. The races aren't much of a challenge at first, but every time you move up the ladder to each new, more difficult race series, the fun doubles.

Onto the graphics, and this is probably the best part of the game. Even in-game, in the middle of a race, it's tempting to stop and admire the crowd, the cars, the track itself. Every crash is played out perfectly, with jarring screens and a collision model that turns the cars into smoking heaps that look surprisingly beautiful (if you're a crazed psychopath who finds beauty in destruction). The point isn't to wreck your car, but try it out anyway for the sake of knowing, because you really don't want to find out what a fully kitted out Nissan Silvia drift car looks like when it's a crumpled heap of metal and fiberglass in real life. This is stuff that should be moving you to tears, but Grid 2 lets you witness it in the safety of a virtual world.

All in all, a great game even if you aren't a proper car enthusiast but you're looking for a little high speed thrill in your free time. The car enthusiasts will grumble under their breaths, but you can't please everyone all the time, right?

SHAER REAZ