



# Greener Pastures

## Are you missing out by not going for a car that isn't a Toyota?

The concept of owning a car that isn't made by Toyota is preposterous to an overwhelming number of Bangladeshis, or at least that was the case back in the day. Nowadays, some people have wised up and more are slowly realising that it's actually okay to own cars that don't have the Toyota logo on them. Saif Al-din Abdullah is one of those people.

His family has owned non-Hondas before, and for a period of time the family cars were provided by Saif's father's office, a myriad collection consisting of a Nissan Sunny, a Mitsubishi Outlander, and a big, hulking Toyota Prado. After being ferried around for almost a year in a Toyota Prado, when it was time to go back to a family sedan again, Saif pushed his parents to go for something bigger and a bit more luxurious than a garden variety Corolla.

For most upper middle class families in Dhaka, "big and luxurious car" spells either a Premio or an Allion, and if they're a bit more "adventurous", maybe they'll splurge the cash and buy a brand new Corolla GLi, playing it safe for the rest of the car's lifespan.

Saif had fallen in love with the 2007 Honda Civic, going to great lengths and using a tasteful selection of adjectives to describe that generation Civic's design. He wanted one, and his parents were willing to respect the wishes of the only son, so off they went to DHS Motors, the Honda distributor. Incidentally, that was the year (2010) when Honda decided to bring in only the Hybrid Civics, which were nice enough according to Saif, but as he describes after a test drive, "they were a little bit too boring".

Luckily for Saif, DHS had a petrol driven 2009 Civic waiting to be sold. Moreover, it was registered and came with a complete Modulo bodykit and Championship White pearl paint. It had less than a thousand miles on the clock, having been used for a brief period of time by a DHS Motors high-up. It was still brand new in almost every way, and the slight mileage was enough to reduce the price to within Saif and his family's budget. The 2010 Premio and the Lancer EX he had looked at previously never stood a chance

after the test drive was over.

The interior, with its two tiered display and futuristic dashboard layout, not to mention the acres of rear legroom, won over the parents and Saif finally had the car he had wanted for over four years. The cab forward design gives a lot of space for both front and rear passengers. 6 feet tall? Not a problem. Initially he had no plans of doing anything to the car and kept it factory fresh stock for a little over a year and a half before the customizing bug bit him.

The plan was simple: make it stand out and give it a little more presence on the street



Spacecraft styling with rocket turbine lights.

without going overboard and making the car unusable as a daily family car. That spelled out only cosmetic modifications, and that's the path he took.

The Mugen RR served as inspiration, bodykit-wise. Reload Autos sourced him front and rear Mugen RR bumpers, with original Modulo sideskirts and rear lip spoiler, with fit and finish done at Rangs. Saif wanted quality and the parts were sourced from Taiwan instead of the usual Chinese waxy plastic items that grace Lancer EXs here. The bump-

ers latched on perfectly, but the front grille had to go through some grinder work for proper fitment. The guys at Rangs did a tremendous job of retrofitting the stock Honda badge and grille onto the Mugen RR grille frame, so much so that people are often confused and think the kit came stock with the car. The rear diffuser required a dual exhaust setup conversion, and that was dealt with by some more professional work at Rangs.

To finish it all off, the exterior was treated to the finest paint from Berger's Nexa Auto Colour catalog, with Saif opting for a Jaguar

outclasses any Premio or Allion, the i-Vtec pushing the revs up effortlessly when you need it to. The driving experience is typically modern, muted and comfy. It's not particularly sporty but press the gas pedal firmly down and the transmission does kick down, much quicker than its contenders from the Toyota family. You'd be surprised how agile and quick it feels for its size. The car is wide and long but the seemingly diminutive 1.6 does a fair job of pulling it along. Turn in is quite sharp and while it does have a soft suspension setup, it is by no means woolly. You won't feel like you're in a boat. Bumps are damped properly without ever being jarring and harsh.

Future plans? Saif wants to get a nice looking set of rims and bigger exhaust tips to finish off the exterior, then he'll hang up the gloves, call it a day and enjoy the Civic.

When the car was in the bodyshop being worked on, Saif and family used a 2005 Premio F for the daily grind. While the F was an effortless workhorse, Saif says he would never trade in his Civic for any other Toyota family car, new or old, because according to him, none of them provide the balance of efficiency, sportiness, entry level luxury or style that the Civic gives him.

One complaint he has though is the cost of maintenance. He runs the Civic on petrol, and on top of the fuel costs, the servicing and the occasional parts change puts a bit of a dent on the wallet. Even then, considering a new Premio or a Corolla GLi would have almost similar running costs, Saif says he loves the experience of owning and driving a Civic, even in Dhaka.

Makes you wonder, is a Premio or Allion really worth it? Saif was lucky enough to find a non-Hybrid Civic at the price of a reconditioned Toyota of a similar grade, but who says you can't find one gem too? In this case, we think the grass is definitely greener on Saif's side of the field.

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### OWNER

Saif Al-din Abdullah

### AGE

Old enough to have seen Zinedine Zidane and the original Ronaldo in action.

### INTERESTS

Studying, engineering, studying, more studying (woes of a BUET mechanical engineering student).

## SPECS

### 2009 Honda Civic FD4

**EXTERIOR:** Civic Mugen RR front and rear bumpers, custom rear diffuser light, Mugen RR grille with retrofitted original badge, Modulo bootlid lip spoiler, Modulo sideskirts, Jaguar Emerald Fire paint.

**ENGINE/EXHAUST:** 1.6 litre R16A1 inline 4-cylinder petrol driven engine. Stock exhaust system with dual exhaust tips.

**TRANSMISSION:** 5 speed CVT Automatic.

**SUSPENSION:** Stock.

**RIMS AND TYRES:** 16-inch original Honda wheels with Bridgestone 195/60 all around.

**INTERIOR:** Sparco pedals.



## TWO WHEELER REVIEW PULSAR 135LS

# Mini Pulsar, big on performance

Pulsar has always been a big name in small bike performance in India since its launch in 2001. The base 150cc model was quickly followed by bigger variants of 180, 200 and a fuel injected, badass-for-its-class 220cc Pulsar. The Bangladeshi market was nearly flooded with bigger displacement Pulsars the moment the 150cc ban was lifted.

So they went up the rung. And in 2009 they decided to go down the rung too. The Pulsar 135LS we're reviewing here was designed to take on the stiffer competition from the sub 150cc class. What



makes this a noteworthy contender if you're a biker? It was designed as a new entrant and was made to look significantly different than the bulkier variants. The sharply angled tank flaps and the headlight cowl surrounds give it an agile, almost predatory look. The stance is a little hunkered down and it looks ready to lunge even when standing still. I personally love the spindly aluminum number plate bracket.

It has all the required gadgets for this class. LCD backlit meters that show speed, mileage, trip specifics and fuel. But you say it's not a 150cc. Think again. The engine has a four valve head which is quite rare

in this segment, with a linear torque curve allowing the small engine to power through the gears smoothly. You have to remember this is a very light bike, meaning power to weight ratio is brilliant at over 100bhp/tonne. The moniker LS in its name stands for Light Sport. It's fun launching the bike at the verge of 9000rpm. It will surprise a few 150cc bikes with its initial surge.

In Bangladesh, you're darting from one jam-packed place to another, but who says you can't do some spirited riding when the road opens up? Fuel consumption is a respectable average of 45-50kmpl for real world city riding. You can extend that, but what's the fun in that?

The clip-on handlebars give it a racier look while still maintaining a moderately upright seating position. It's comfortable but the pillion comfort is not very good as it slants forward, making the rider up front compensate for the weight of the passenger occasionally. Of course, none of the riders complained when it was their significant others as the passenger.

What most riders don't like is the vibrations that become apparent at higher speeds. But then, very few bikes of this class are smooth at the limit. It's a nimble light bike, but people want bigger, bolder looks so it often gets overlooked. In a tight city space, light is right. That makes it a great learner's bike and a good city carver with a touch of style. You'll find good used ones for around 1.4lakh. Try it, you won't be disappointed.



### Specs:

Power: 13.3 bhp @ 9000RPM  
 Redline: 10500  
 Torque: 8.4lb/ft @ 7500RPM  
 Transmission: 5 speed  
 Kerb weight: 122kg  
 Braking (front/rear): Disc/drum  
 Speed: 112kmph  
 Power to weight ratio: 109hp per tonne

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## Datsuns are back!

Nissan recently announced that the marque that made way for the modern Nissan Motor Co., Datsun, is coming back in an all-new guise to India, and possibly even Bangladesh.

Considering the immense popularity Datsun's small to medium sized cars had in the Indian subcontinent (mostly due to cheap running costs, rock solid build and zippy fun), this seems to be a great move.

Datsun DID give us the 240Z, but you'll be disappointed if you're expecting fireworks. The new Datsun is Nissan's cheap car wing, and the new models will mostly compete with Hyundais and Suzukis for the small car segment (like the Datsun Go that was unveiled along with the announcement). Expect build quality to be top notch, though.

