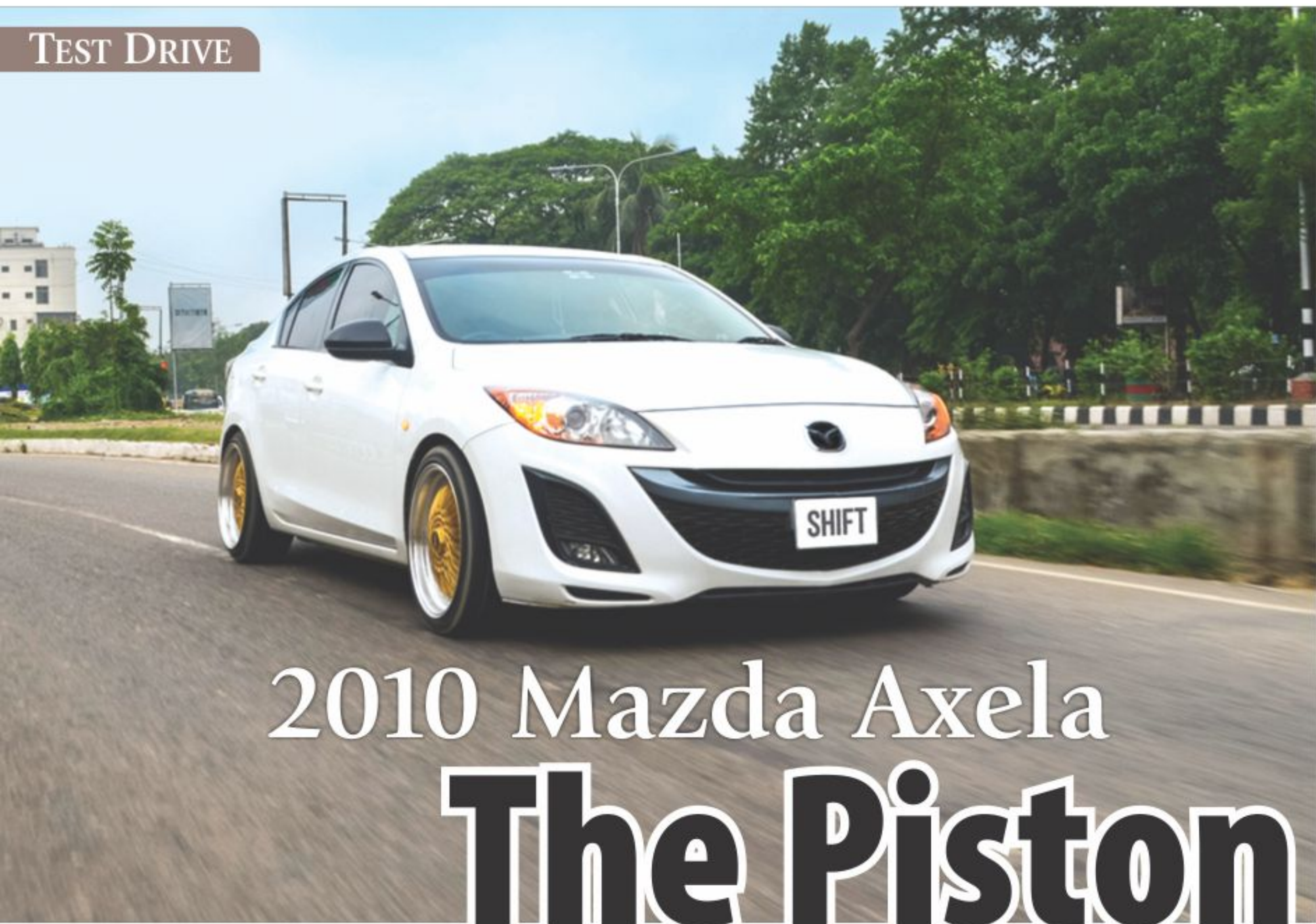




TEST DRIVE



2010 Mazda Axela

The Piston Mazda

When we hear Mazda the first thing that comes to mind is the rotary powered RX sportscars. A crazy, eccentric technology at best, the rotary has for years been Mazda's claim to being different. But Mazda makes some amazing conventionally powered piston engine cars that go bang in four cycles. Enter the Axela, also known as the Mazda3.

Mazda has been conspicuously absent from our market despite having a good lineup of models. The grey market offers sporadic lots of



some of the more popular models. The first generation Axela (2003-2008) was a reasonably big hit in the Bangladeshi market for its then innovative styling. There were a lot of these cars running around because they offered a little something different from your everyday garden variety cars. Sharper ride and styling were prime reasons to opt for the car. There was a lull in the past couple of years, but recently we've started seeing a lot of the second gen models in the showrooms. So we got

hold of one to see what it's like and if it's any different than before.

The car now borrows heavily on the friendly face theme of Mazda's corporate design language. Look at the front and you're presented with a slightly manic smiling face. You see this same face on the slightly insane RX8s. It's a corporate family thing but the design works, the car looks sharp and contemporary without having that dated feel. This is a car that will have a lot of pictures taken on the floodlit roads of Hatirjheel.



Owner: Saadman Sadat Hossain
Hails from: Green Road
Currently: Studying A-levels.



Specs

2010 Mazda Axela

Engine: 1.6 liter 4 cylinder petrol engine.
Numbers: 105 HP @6000 rpm, 107 lb-ft torque @4000 rpm.
Brakes: All wheel disc brakes.
Wheels and tires: 225/40 R-18 tires, 18 inch aftermarket BBS wheels.

Price: 26-28 lakh taka for the Mazda Axela.

Mazda

While most new cars of this segment have gone for the bulky cab-forward design, this retains some of the car shaped proportions we love: a decently long hood and a short deck. The inside of this car borrows quite a bit from the Mazda Atenza (aka Mazda6), the seats are firm and the dash layout is simple yet very functional.

It comes with the 1.6-liter engine delivering about 105hp and 107 lb/ft of. That's not as much power as I'd like to expect from a car of this displacement but then, numbers on paper aren't always the same as the real life delivery.

The car accelerates with a little hesitation in the beginning but from the second gear on from 2500rpm upward, the car gets a gentle kick up its backside. The car speeds up gradually making its visual heft feel light, sprightly. The meaty steering wheel provides decent feedback from the road. It's a refreshing change from the numb feel of its more popular contemporaries from other brands.

The car rides on aftermarket 18



inch BBS replicas. Looks great, but you would think the ride would be harsh, noisy and jarring. It's none of those things. I took the car around the heavily potholed DITF road and the car soaked up the bumps with relative ease despite the low, low profile rubber. This is a daily driver although the stock yet low ride height means all speed breakers in our country have to be taken at an angle.

Verdict: It looks good and has the right physical proportions that make the large shape feel less bulky. Ride is very comfortable, easily soaks up our massive potholes without much noise getting inside.

The power figures are low on paper but the delivery is quick. This is a zippy midsize car you won't get tired of driving around. It's also very fuel efficient with the tiptronic gears making life a little more interesting when you're in the mood.

This was bought for 35 lakhs back in 2012. You should look into the current Mazda Axela hatchback in the market. If you want more power, current tax rates should make the much more powerful 2.0 available at decent rates.

WORDS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY
PHOTOS: TASDID CHOWDHURY

Budget Concerns

Every time a national budget is announced, the car buying and car owning crowd start having migraines and severe headaches from the copious amounts of hair they pull out from their heads, often augmented by sullen shakes of the head and some liberal head scratching at the ridiculous nature of the supplementary duties placed on cars. Cue angry Facebook statuses and insults hurled at the finance minister's lack of foresight.

So what has the government done this time?

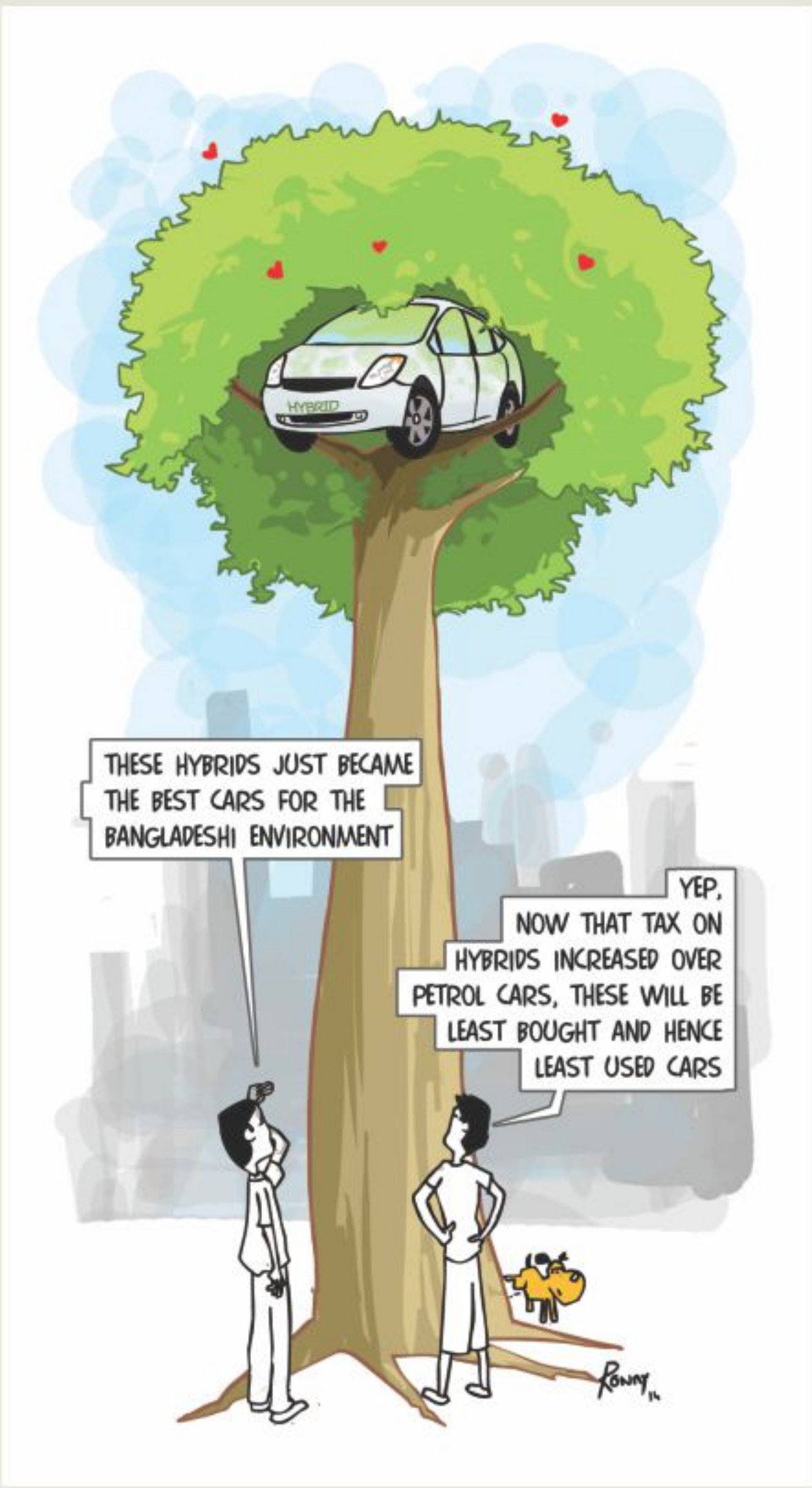
No replacement for displacement
If you're eyeing that 2000cc Toyota Premio on tradecarview.com because a 1500cc Premio F just went cut it, you're in luck. The newly sanctioned budget has a lower supplementary duty on cars with engine displacement ranging from 1501 to 2000cc, down to 100 percent of listed price as opposed to the previous 150 percent. That basically translates to cheaper mid-level luxury cars, which is a good thing if you're a car geek but kind of redundant when you think the primary goal of the budget with regard to the transport sector is to reduce traffic congestion and increase government revenue from taxation. Where is the increased revenue from the luxury cars? Beats us, but it's not entirely a daft idea, as the range of vehicles imported (reconditioned or otherwise) has scopes of increasing, providing more choices and options for the car buying crowd.

And ye shall ride in cheaper SUVs

Along with lower duties levied on luxury cars, the new budget has lower taxes on Sports Utility Vehicles (between 2,001-2,750cc), down to 200 percent from 250 percent. The gas guzzling luxury vehicles, oft the choice of transport for ministers and business owners and the social elites, are now effectively cheaper. It seems the budget is tailored to reducing the duty on luxury automobiles, and if the middle and upper-middle classes can afford to reach up and buy cars previously reserved for richer folk, what's the harm, right? Keep reading.

Little consideration for the small folk

Contrary to previous budgets, sub 1500cc vehicles get no special privileges, with the same, albeit quite low duty of 45 percent placed on cars in that displacement range. Expect most of the models brought in on a regular basis in the reconditioned and brand new car markets to cost relatively the same as before. Why this crunch on smaller displacement cars while larger displacement luxury cars are cheaper to import? We assume it's a way of discouraging new car buyers from



upgrading to newer imports, unless they are really, really rich.

Going green? Pay up.

With quite the emphasis placed on fighting climate change elsewhere on the budget, the finance minister sure made a drastic u-turn when it came to environment friendly, fuel efficient hybrid cars. Previously, hybrid car importers enjoyed a low rate of 30 percent supplementary duty on hybrids with 1,500 to 2,500cc conventional powertrains, but due to a lack of trained technicians with the ability to ensure maintenance of these cars, imports were quite low. Its picking up however, and the government thinks it's the opportune time to increase the duty on hybrids in search of revenue, by raising the duty to 60 percent. Funnily enough, and I quote finance minister AMA Muhiit here, "This will encourage importation of more quality and environment-friendly vehicles, yielding revenue." We don't know if he accidentally added a zero and wrote 60 percent instead of 6, but generally a higher duty on a car makes it more expensive, which reduces its ability to sell.

Seating more will cost you more.

Microbuses and pickup trucks carry a higher supplementary duty (45 percent, up from 30) in the new budget if their engine size falls between 1500 to 1800cc, while higher displacement ones have the same 60 percent tax on them as before. Company cars and delivery trucks will be more expensive, as the import of these

vehicles require "some control."

More revenue equals better roads and public transport, right?
Sure. In theory. Although, going by the past few years, the benefits are long term, and this unicorn of "reduced traffic congestion" the government is running after, seems to be nowhere in sight. Right now, the three way tug of war between car importers, car buyers and the government regarding import duty, transportation sector advancement, and environmental impacts of automobiles, doesn't seem to be letting up even a little. Almost atypical of Bangladesh? You decide.

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

OPTIONS

Real World Racing Z

It's refreshing to come across a racing game which does things differently. In the sea of street racing titles like Need For Speed and the simulation racers like GranTurismo and Forza, its quite rare to get a racing game which is radically different. Blur, the arcade racer with power ups and fast paced racing, is one that sticks to recent memory. Even that genre is saturated, with games like Burnout competing head to head with



Rating: 7/10

Blur.

A view from the top has rarely been explored outside of games like highway racers on ancient game consoles and modern phone apps. Real World Racing explores that very same idea, but puts its own twist to it.

Using satellite imagery of major cities of the world, such as London, New York, Tokyo and many more, Real World Racing takes its title pretty seriously, with all the racing action placed on actual routes across real world cities. It makes

takes some getting used to, but its fun when you get the hang of it.

The cars are unlicensed but they all look 90% similar to actual production cars, and the performance of the cars correspond to the real world versions of these "fakes". You get access to fake versions of everything from the Merc A-class to the Lancer Evo, to the Porsche 918 Spyder, with almost instantly recognizable shapes.

Its all about the fun, less about the details. Makes it more of a mobile game than a full-fledged PC game, but we aren't complaining.



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