



TEST DRIVE

The wallet friendly SUV: 2014 Ford EcoSport

Is it a mini SUV or a station wagon on steroids? Both actually. It's the perfect little urban car. You get the lofty driving position of an SUV. It allows you to see over hundreds of rickshaw tops in front, to spot the fight going on at the end of the traffic jam where a bus just rammed another car. But unlike a rolly-polly SUV, this is very car-like to drive. Its platform is based on the new Fiesta and that's a good thing, because the Fiesta rides superbly.

Is my chauffeur going to enjoy driving it?

Most people hand their new cars to chauffeurs and this would be a mistake. Mistake because this is a fun and easy car to drive. We spent nearly two hours trundling around in traffic to get to our destination. In the meantime we navigated around hundreds of pampered school children and their attending vehicles. The tight, sharply rounded design means you can effortlessly squeeze through narrow gaps. You don't feel like this is a lumbering brute, quite the opposite. Cool AC and a solid interior means the noisy world stays well outside. The car is easy to see out of, and the proximity sensors make it breeze to get into tight spaces.

Can I race it to remind me of Ford's long racing history?

Well, sort of, but you have to remember this is an urban runabout. It's designed to be effortless and gentle. The engine on offer is the 1.5 petrol with 108 bhp and 103lb/ft of torque. The automatic gearbox is tuned for efficiency and smoothness and when you jam down your foot, it tries to remind you to take it easy. The buttery soft clutch action manual would be the preferred choice here but sadly, that's not an option yet. There will be a 1.5 diesel with the manual coming soon. I did let out my inner demon when I finally reached an empty road. 2500RPM onward things get urgent. The car picks up speed, and being built on the same underpinnings as the Fiesta reaps benefits. The semi-independent rear

SPECS

2014 Ford EcoSport

Engine: 1.5 liter 1.5L Ti-VCT 4 cylinder (108 HP @ 6300 RPM, 105 lb-ft torque @ 4000 RPM).
Transmission: 5 speed automatic. Wheels and tires: 205/60R16 ATR tires with 16 inch alloys.
Brakes: Power discs front, drum brakes rear with ABS, ESC.
Standard equipment: 6 airbags, Ford SYNC USB and auxiliary cable supported audio system, steering mounted audio controls, four cupholders, power boot release, heated rear window, proximity sensors.
Options: Push start, leather seats.
Price: 35-41 lakh taka with 3yr/60,000km warranty.
For options and availability, contact AG Automobiles Ltd.



suspension lets you take wet, bumpy turns at speed without hopping all over the place. We went a little tail out in the wet (main picture) without any drama or a visit to a hospital. There is some slight body roll due to the high posture but it holds its composure way better than most other mini SUVs on sale right now.

And as for race-car feels, there's always the push-button start.

We Bangladeshi always thought Fords were high-end. How pampered will I feel?

The interior is well specced. There's everything you need: air-con and big,

bolstered comfy seats that come wrapped in leather on the higher trim models. The ride is extremely compliant, with the small wheelbase soaking up the bathtub sided potholes surprisingly well. I didn't think the small wheelbase would perform this well but it did. There's a huge boot, big enough to store a family's monthly groceries and/or my lazy sub-editors.

Can you talk to it like it's a person?
Yeah. You can talk to your car. It accepts voice commands. Fun thing, although we were too busy enjoying driving instead of trying to pretend to be in an episode of Knight Rider.

I hear there's a turbo.
There's a 1.0 turbocharged three cylinder engine of the same car. Ford doesn't sell it in Bangladesh but I've driven one. It's cracking little car. Interestingly noisy and thrashy with plenty of grunt from the 123bhp, this is quite special. The engine is light, powerful and terrific for the

VERDICT

The Ford looks terrific from the side and the catfish front gives it an aggressive appearance. We love aggressive without the silliness of unnecessary spoilers and intakes. The mini SUV rides like a car meaning it is comfortable, steers well and exhibits a composed ride over our terrible, terrible roads. The performance is zippy and the safety features are excellent with 6 airbags and ABS/EBD and ESC offering peace of mind. Price range is 35-41 lakh taka coupled with a 3yr/60,000km warranty.

environment and more importantly, your wallet. Bangladeshi users will have to settle for 1.5 because we love our displacement.

WORDS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY
PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM

"There's no replacement for displacement" - or so the saying used to go. Once upon a time, for more go, you needed bigger engines; bigger engines meant louder bragging rights. The times have changed. Bigger displacement now means either your car stays at home or you become a frequent club member of all the fuel stations. Luckily, the small stuff is now only small in dimension. Car designers have finally hit upon the magic formula of small engine, maximum power output and compact packaging. Small has become cool again. You get interesting stuff like the Mini (which is not quite mini) and the Nano (which it is). The only problem is, people refuse to stay small.

- EhsanurRaza Ronny, Editor, Shift.



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SHIFT GARAGE

Brake failure signs & solutions

We love to upgrade our cars. Some of us do it by adding stickers and sparkly lights, others do it by tweaking the performance. Some may argue that way too many stickers make a car just as fast. It's being hotly debated in our canteen right now. But being fast is a secondary concern. Being able to stop is more important. Maintaining brakes should be the number one concern for any car owner. Catching a braking problem before it becomes a full blown death warrant is more important than not missing a single episode of Game of Thrones. Below are the top three common brake issues.

Noise: Brakes should work noiselessly like a good robot slave. If there's an ear-splitting shriek each time you stop, there's a problem. Disc brake caliper have a warning tab that does just as the name suggests. When the pads are too thin, that tab connects to the disc and starts screaming, literally, to warn you you're out of 'brake'. Time to replace brakes pads or risk having your brake disc suffer some serious grooves. Some brake pads are made of metallic compounds that cause slight squeaking during normal operation. There's a difference between acceptable squeak and a metallic scratching and shrieking.

Solution: Replace with new brake pads. Or turn up the music till everything breaks down. We wouldn't suggest the latter.

Spongy/hard pedal: If you press the brake and the pedal just gives up like a two-day old *shingara*, this could mean a fluid leak. If brake fluid is leaking, pedal will be spongy. On the other hand, if pedal feels too hard and



cannot be compressed that could mean there is air/water in the line. Brake fluid is hygroscopic. What this fancy word means is that brake fluid has the ability to absorb water from its surroundings. Which is why brake master cylinder reservoir has a tight plastic cap over it. Despite that the fluid still needs changing every two years or so because it breaks down.

Solution: Have the brake fluid replaced and the lines bled clear of air properly. If the pedal is still soft and low, have the booster line and the check valve...checked. In times like these, the brake master cylinder is probably toast. If the pedal is always hard despite proper bleeding, the brake booster is likely at fault because it is not able to balance the vacuum properly. Sometimes when a master cylinder fails, it leaks fluid into the brake booster which eats away the rubber diaphragm in the booster. While you're at it, check each brake hose behind each wheel. These should be firm and solid.

Vibrations: Every time you brake does it feel like you are receiving a foot massage? While it may sound comfortable, it's not a comforting thought. Vibrations while braking mean your brake disc is warped. The brakes are grabbing/not grabbing/grabbing and so on. This happens when discs have been through tremendous stress and suffered from excessive heat buildup.

Solution: Have the discs turned (cut) in a lathe to make them even again.

If you have more queries, mail us to shift@thelystar.net

EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

The Ultimate City Slinger

Shift tries to design a city car!

The present world is mad about small, efficient, zippy city cars. We'd all like to tell ourselves we love city cars because they are environmentally friendly without being overly pretentious and that they are ideal for use on city streets where you'd actually think of sharing roadspace with other people. However, truth is, city cars hurt our wallet less in every way than bigger, more luxurious cars. While under the influence of cheapness, things can go a bit awry.

So, without much further ado, we are happy to introduce the Shift designed city car for Dhaka streets, compiled with features that give a car the necessary balance of cheap cost, reliability, simplicity, quality, and size.

It's all on paper, and it's all hypothetical, but see if it makes sense to you.

The engine: Not more than 1.3 liters, with the right balance of grunt and fuel economy. Hybrid powertrains are expensive to manufacture and the gains are not significant enough over conventional petrol power, so scratch the hybrid. A turbo-diesel

would've made sense as well, but our Natural Gas-crazy nation wouldn't know what to do with one. So, small displacement petrol engine, with simplicity the key factor.

Transmission: People hate driving manuals here, and granted that shifting frequently while sitting in traffic can get annoying, we'll go with a 4 speed automatic. CVTs offer significant fuel savings, especially where frequent heavy traffic is involved, but maintenance cost and relative complications over a conventional automatic means CVT is dropped from the menu.

Seating: Seats 5, with foldable rear seats. Driver and front passenger get preference, with proper padded seats. Rudimentary rear seats to keep costs down.

Interior and packaging: Air-conditioning is a must for our climate, but to keep things efficient and light weight, we fit the smallest possible combination of AC compressor and ancillary equipment. Efficient packaging is a trump card of city cars, so chuck out

the spare tire in favour of run-flat tires for better bootspace and lighter weight, do away with a big stereo system and absolutely anything that is not needed. Including extra floor-mats, door-card trims, and so on.

That special feature: Suicide doors. Before you laugh us off as jokers, think about it. It'll reduce the dimensions of the car and will provide easy access for the rear occupants. Plus, it's cool.

Okay so it isn't complete yet. Watch this space as we build on the ideas for the perfect city car in Dhaka. Send us your ideas and suggestions at shift@thelystar.net, and we'll see if we can incorporate them. Plus, if any generous soul wants to invest in our overly ambitious and quite rubbish plans, we accept cash only. Returns on investment guaranteed.

For a review of an actual city car, tune in to Shift next week for a review of the brand new Tata Nano.

SHAER REAZ