

CONCEPT WATCH



Nissan Kicks Concept: Nope, Nissan didn't make this concept car for laughs and kicks. It seems to be hinting at a smaller, more efficient crossover slotting in under the Juke.

TEST DRIVE

Gen-X

2014 Hyundai Xcent

Two words to sum up this car: genuinely surprising. Does Hyundai have the competitive zing that they need to root itself into the Bangladeshi market with the sub-compact 2014 Xcent? The car is fairly cut and dry. The mini-sedan concept is really taking the car scene by storm, especially in the South Asian countries where oil prices are anything but low. The Xcent is adopted from the hugely popular i10 hatchback that sold like hot bread when it came out. Hyundai hopes to extend its legacy of reliability, fuel efficiency, and competitive prices with the new guy on the block.

The car was made of everything I normally dislike. It had a high center of balance, tiny wheels and didn't have much leg space, but you know what? Once on the driver's seat none of that mattered much.

Considering how tiny the engine is, the Xcent was quick. I maneuvered between big rigs and long buses with finesse. The 1.2 Kappa Petrol engine (with 82 horsepower and 114 Nm of torque) offered sufficient acceleration and the climb to 100 was surprisingly swift. Surprising because the car carried four passengers, with myself weighing as much as two people. The instant torque at my disposal wasn't a lot, but the power to leverage ratio made all the difference. In Bashundhara I made a reverse climb over a steep incline and the engine didn't struggle. All throughout the ride, the bumps on the roads were soaked and the car maintained composure over all kinds of city terrain. Cabin noises didn't surface. I drove over potholes and crevices hoping to make the door-panels creek and the dashboard rattle. Again, I was surprised. However, I had a big issue with the steering on this car. The power steering was very vague. It didn't respond as swiftly as you would expect, and it was jittery to a certain extent.

Hyundai packed the interior with a ton of surprises. The air-con was very good, and the car has ducts in the rear so back seat passengers won't pester their chauffeur to turn up the air-con. No other car in this class, for this kind of money, will provide that.



Factory installed auxiliary and USB ports give you the option of plugging in your phone, whilst charging it at the same time. The seats were firm and the driver has an RPM meter. Did I mention all options were automatic? The transmission, window controls, side view mirrors, along with the air-conditioning unit has digital controls. Quality stuff considering how this is a budget sedan. All audio and channel controls are conveniently placed on the steering wheel to ensure you don't take your eyes off the road to change the tunes. The coolest part of the car is the holographic rear camera that pops up on the rear view mirror every time you put the gear into reverse.

The design is not a big issue in this range of cars, but overall, the Xcent is thoroughly modern enough to compensate for the slightly disproportionate dimensions of the car. Short front and rear overhangs are a result of the hatchback platform the Xcent is based on, but the pared back front end and compact rear make the car a decent looker. It won't be winning any design awards, but good looks will not exactly be the selling point of this car either.

The car comes in two variants; the 1.1 diesel engine, and the 1.2 Kappa Petrol engine, but we only get the 1.2 petrol version on sale here. While standard versions come with a five-speed manual transmission standard, our test car had a peppy four-speed

automatic option. I would prefer the automatic because in all honesty no one wants a hard time driving around Dhaka city on a stick shift. This is no weekend car either. The petrol engine will give you great return on the money you have to spend on oil; almost 19 kilometers per liter in city drive.

Who should drive this? Well obviously we're looking at a daily-driver family car. And I would buy this for my family. You'd be able to take the kids to school, haul in the week's groceries, finish up everyday chores, go all around Dhaka city, pick up the wife from her workplace, and still have plenty of fun doing all of that. If the company I work for gave me



this car to drive, I would get used to the convenience and ease of use quite fast.

Is it worth my money? Yes. A brand new car, which I can drive with ease, on the same expense as a CNG driven car, packed full of Korean goodies and tech? Absolutely! For young company executives and for new families this car would serve like a faithful canine.

WORDS: MOHAMMAD AKIB NAWAZ

PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM



Iran's automotive market

The untapped goldmine?

When you think of emerging automotive markets, most people automatically think of China or India. There's a new contender in the ring, however, as a lifting of sanctions might soon grant Iran the same amount of attention as India and China as far as investments in the automotive manufacturing sector goes.

The country of around 77 million present a big opportunity to foreign car-makers interested in untapped markets to sell their wares to, but due to political strife, huge restrictions on foreign involvement imposed by the Islamic Republic, and economic sanctions placed on it have pretty much killed the scope for manufacturers over the past decade.

French carmakers Renault and Peugeot-Citroen enjoyed a huge popularity in Iran throughout the 90's,



Iran Khodro Samand: Iran's national car.

but the turn of the decade and the turmoil erupting in the Middle East forced them to pull out of Iran altogether. The deals and manufacturing method sharing stayed in place, however, and local manufacturers like Iran Khodro and Saipa were left with an open playing field. What ensued in the decade after were hashed and rehearsed 90's models of French cars, sold as local products and exported to countries like Russia

and Syria.

Iran's nuclear program forced world powers to place crippling sanctions on the country, and now that an understanding of sorts has been reached and sanctions seem to be lifting, global automakers are seeking a return to this lucrative market. Iran Khodro, the country's largest vehicle manufacturer (with their impossibly 90's French car copy and best selling "national car", the Samand), seem

reluctant to head back into a partnership with their old benefactors, Peugeot-Citroen, because if its one thing Iranians hate, its people who quit on their country. Which, in today's world, seems to be pretty much everyone.

Will this self-dependence and rigidity pay-off in the long run for Iran's automotive industry? The manufacturers seem to be doing great in the domestic market: Iran Khodro produced 600,000 units in 2011 alone. In a world where Chinese copycats can sell by the boatloads because they're cheaper and offer the basic motoring need of going from point A to B, there's a chance that Iran might be the surprise contender in the automotive world of tomorrow.

SHAER REAZ

SHIFT ZONE

The rise of the Koreans has been foretold for a while now. The climb of Korean car makers like Hyundai and KIA continue to defy detractors and are making things tougher for the rest of the world. Soon, it will be China's turn, followed by India, and, in a surprise twist no one expected, maybe even Iran. Strange world, no?

This week we review the Hyundai Xcent, a surprising, quirky and zippy little car.

--Shaer Reaz, Sub-editor, Shift

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BIKER TIPS

Stay in charge:

Battery maintenance



Batteries begin dying the moment you start using them. They will die faster if you don't take proper care. One sure-fire way to kill batteries is to let the electrolyte solution get too low. That would be the liquid stuff inside. Low electrolyte exposes the internal plates which then suffer from reduced charge-holding capacity and extra heat build-up. The latter is what signs the death warrant. Check the batteries once a month and top up with de-ionised water when needed. Also, greasing your bike's battery terminals to avoid corrosion. This goes for car users as well. Just make sure not to touch both terminals at the same time. It makes for quite a shocking experience.

WORDS: NUTBOLTU

IMAGE: E.R. RONNY

SHIFT GARAGE

Bird attacks

Saving your car's paint from bird poop

Bird poop on your car paint is as big a deal as running out of water in the toilet. It's fundamentally evil, yet, in both cases, you don't really understand the impact till after the incident has passed.

Bird poop on paint leaves marks as it dries. Some say it is the uric acid that etches marks while others say it is the warm paint that cools around the spattered droppings. Either way, the blemish is nasty. It's nastier for darker colors because those reflect the marks more prominently.

What to do? The simplest is to grab hold of specific cleaners to tackle the problem. But we never have specific cleaners on hand as we don't live in an ideal world. So get hold of plain old water, soak a tissue or wad of newspaper. This is yet another adovcation for keeping old issues of The Daily Star around. Let the poop soak. Lift up and inspect damage. Whatever you do, don't scrub.

If you end up with two-week old poop that has left a nasty mini map of Africa on your paint, it's time to apply some rubbing compound to buff out the marks. This will gently smooth out layers of your clear coat to remove the unevenness. But prevention here is better than cure.

WORDS: NUTBOLTU

IMAGE: E.R. RONNY



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YEAR'S

WARRANTY

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