

CONCEPT WATCH

Hyundai's Santa Cruz cross-over concept might not stay a concept for too long. Aimed at the next generation of "urban adventurers", the Santa Cruz combines sleek dimensions, carrying capacity and interior space in a zany looking package.



SHIFT

HATCH-MANIA

The best hatchbacks on sale in Bangladesh.

Hatchbacks are easy to park, drive, and maintain. They should be at the forefront of prospective car owner's minds, and we have no idea why more people aren't going for a practical run-about instead of SUVs and large sedans. The fuel efficiency and the hatchback lifestyle choice are great as well.



PRICE: STARTS FROM 9.85 lakh taka.

SUZUKI ALTO

The Alto is the perfect entry level hatchback. Tiny 800cc 3 cylinder engine mated to a 5 speed manual gearbox ensures fuel mileage figures well above average, while the lightweight hatch makes the city driving experience an interesting one. It'll zip in and out of traffic, put a smile on your face because of the snippy acceleration, and as a daily driver, it makes a lot of sense. It wont win beauty pageants, though, so you gotta live with it.



PRICE: STARTS FROM 15 lakh taka.

HONDA BRIO

The 1200 cc Honda Brio is an Indian origin Honda, with quirky, definitive styling inside and out. Optimized for Indian roads, you can expect the Brio to take on Dhaka's potholes with confidence, and developed to sell in a country obsessed with fuel economy means the Brio is going to be wallet friendly as well. The 5 speed manual gearbox helps with the fuel efficiency.

SHIFT ZONE

Hatchbacks are the way to go for fun-filled, zippy city driving. Fuel economy and practicality are given, but the fun factor can be overlooked for these small econo-boxes in most cases. This week, we bring you a list of the most fun and practical hatchbacks on sale in Bangladesh. Alongside, we have the test drive of the drop dead gorgeous Alfa Romeo MiTo, which oozes with style and Italian heritage, as well as delivering on the performance front.

Shaer Reaz-Sub-editor, Shift

SHIFT GARAGE

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS PRICING

SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Amidst all the political violence in the country with petrol bombs and incendiary projectiles, wouldn't you feel safer with a fire extinguisher close at hand?

TYPE: ABC CHEMICAL

(for flammable gas, flammable liquids and electrical wires)



EXPIRY AFTER: 1 Year
REFILL COST: 100 taka per kg.
SOURCE: Dolphin Fire Safety Equipments

AVAILABLE AT: Hardware stores, LPG stores, high-end electrical equipment stores etc. Wholesale market at Nawabpur.

VOLKSWAGEN POLO



PRICE: STARTS FROM 25 lakh taka

It's a little expensive, but what do you get for that kind of money? German build quality, reliability, and efficiency. The Polo comes in two versions, a 1200cc petrol and 1500cc diesel, and although both offer great mileage figures, we say go for the diesel. Diesel is a cost effective alternative to CNG and petrol, and although the quality of the diesel in Dhaka is questionable, the Polo's build quality ensures it'll run smoothly year in, year out.

SUZUKI SWIFT

Take the good things we said about the Alto, and add a dash of style, more performance and loads more space and you have its older brother, the Swift. The Swift is a hot seller all over the world, and we can see why. It's a crime Bangladeshis are not buying into the Swift following, because it really is a great car.



PRICE: STARTS FROM 16.5 lakh taka.

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TEST DRIVE

Little Italian
2013 Alfa Romeo MiTo

Alfa Romeos are the automotive equivalent of the leggy Italian supermodel: expensive to maintain, demanding constant attention and sentimental and moody when wronged. With some of the most beautiful cars ever made in an impressive narration through its history, Alfa was never financially stable, sales success marred by a downward spiral of build quality and reliability.

Post 2010, things picked up for Alfa. With the success of the flawed but appealing Brera and 159, not to mention the halo car in the 8C, Alfa Romeo made good decisions and added to an expanding model range. Part of what came from that was the MiTo, which enjoyed good sales all over Europe. This week, we took a 2013 MiTo out for a spin.

Initial reactions include wide-eyed appreciation of the MiTo's aesthetic beauty, followed quickly by masked disappointment as closer inspection reveals almost inch wide panel gaps and plastics that look brittle and cheap. No matter. When you're in a gorgeous bright red Alfa, only the most meticulous petrolheads will notice any evidence of panel gaps.

The interior was underwhelming. Swathes of hard plastic cover most of the dash, and while the design itself is simple and elegant enough, the build quality would have to be the biggest let-down. The AC setting knobs give out audible thack-thack noises when rotated, a big disappointment considering the little Alfa's aspirations as an expensive hatchback. The dials look smart and sporty, hinting at a driving experience that could easily drown out the complaints about the build quality.

That, it did. Wholeheartedly. The Alfa's 1.4 liter turbo four cylinder engine, mated to a slightly wheezy and half-hearted six speed manual gearbox is a combination that sounds great on paper: 167 hp, 184lb-ft of torque, and a manufacturer claimed 0-100 km/h time of 7.5

seconds. On the road, the MiTo picked up speed fairly quickly, the engine note muted but throaty. The gearchanges felt slightly soggy, and the clutch needs a little bit of getting used to, even if you're used to driving a manual. The steering is light and responsive, and becomes progressively sensitive at higher speeds. Its quite fun to drive, and would be a blast to zip in and out of traffic on the roads of Dhaka.

The ride is supple and balanced, the small wheelbase not affecting ride comfort much. The MiTo went over bumps and down potholes, and aside from noticeable rattling from all over the interior (you have the build quality to blame for that), the MiTo was composed and planted, mechanically.

If you can ignore the build quality and you have the cash for maintenance, the Alfa MiTo is a very good car. Once you've bought into the Alfa Romeo cult following, though, it's difficult to stay objective, but then objectivity leads to boring, safe purchases.

The car was for sale at Baridhara's Need4Speed showroom, priced at 27.50 lakh taka at the time of this review. A bit steep, considering its pre-owned. Rarity guaranteed, parts, less so.

Pros: Gorgeous looks; responsive, zesty engine; rarity and heritage.

Cons: Slightly soggy gearchange; cheap interior materials; build quality; zero local parts availability.

WORDS: SHAERREAZ
PHOTOS: RAHIDSADMAN ISLAM