

EFFICIENCY SOUL DEFINED

2016 BMW 318i M-package



The BMW 3 series has been representative of the core BMW values ever since the very first one was launched in 1975: efficiency, driver focused performance and a fine balance of power and value for money. The automotive world has rarely seen this level of refinement in a large volume production car; each subsequent generation of the 3 series has improved upon the last, expanding the outer reaches of engineering and design.

The local market has not seen the 3 series do as well as the rest of the world, Bangladeshis preferring the larger and better equipped 5 series, mostly due to unfair taxation policies which meant that the price difference between a 3 and a 5 series was marginal. That has changed and the product of that is the 2016 318i, as well equipped as a 5 series but priced under a crore.

The 318i here is the LCI package, which means it has facelift features in the headlights, taillights, front grille, and more. It also comes equipped with the M visual performance pack, composed of front and rear bumpers, side skirts, M-spec wheels, a shiny exhaust tip and assorted badging. The upgrades lend an aggressive, hyper modern look to the 318, which some would say is a bit pretentious when contrasted with the specs, at least on paper. On paper performance does not capture the true nature of these machines though (see sidebar on driving impressions for more).

As a mid-range luxury executive sedan, the 318 can be specified with a mind-boggling array of options. As tested, the 318i comes with sumptuous black Sensatec leather covering almost every square inch of the interior, coupled with high quality walnut accents. The staple of a quality interior is the ambience, which the BMW does with the help of subtle, hidden LEDs that can be adjusted for colour and brightness using the central command system. Bluetooth, iPod connectivity, CD-DVD and a 7 inch display rounds up the infotainment setup, and the sound quality is top notch with a great degree of customizability.

Sitting in traffic with comfort mode engaged, the BMW is one of the quietest environments on the planet, except perhaps the inside of a Zen monk's head. Minimal road noise is a plus, although the 318 could have been a bit softer over bumps and potholes at speed. Dhaka's endless traffic jams would be a breeze to conquer when sitting in the back, although you would have more fun in the driving seat because of the driver focused nature of the car. Sport plus mode on a open road, with the exhaust opened full tap, should convince you that this is a true driver's car.



SPECS

2016 BMW 318i M-pack

Engine: 1.5-litre three-cylinder turbo petrol engine (134 HP, 162 lb-ft torque).

Transmission: 8 speed auto.

Brakes: Ventilated disc front, solid disc rear, ABS, EBD, Vehicle Stability Assist and Traction Control.

Features and options: Infotainment system with Bluetooth, phone and iPod connectivity, Smart Entry, push start, ambient lighting, steering mounted audio/phone controls, 9-speaker HiFi audio, sunroof with tilt and slide, heated front and rear seats with electric memory and lumbar support for front, rear AC, walnut interior inserts, Sensatec leather, 19 inch alloy wheels and M-Sport bodykit (M-Sport package).

PRICE: 84,00,000 TAKA.

For details, contact Executive Motors Limited.

For under a crore, the 318i as tested is a bargain deal, because you get a car with a lot of equipment and one that drives and looks great. With the beautiful pearl blue paint and the M spec bodykit, this particular 318i was a glorious experience for half a day, and should be equally amazing to own and drive every day for anyone interested in the finest of automobiles.

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PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM

DRIVING THE 318i

Lets start with the cockpit: the 318i with the M package exterior and interior felt sporty enough. Stereo adjustments, volume controls, and even driving modes were on it. The seats were plush and comfy, but not soft enough to sink into. The driver's POV is aesthetically pleasing. The command screen was small and didn't distract me. Neither did pesky lights, or glaring chrome finish: the car had none. The downside is the onboard proximity alerts which go off every time you squeeze into a tight spot which probably should be turned off if the car is used daily in Dhaka.

The drive was hassle free, which is ironic because I thought I was going to have a hard time with this brand new import. The BMW has impressive road-view clearance and turning radius, two very important features. Although traffic can be intimidating, most cars seemed to give way when they saw me driving up. Most truck drivers maintained their distances too. Something about the way this car looks, the color, the front fascia, the BMW badge makes other drivers automatically want to shy away from you.

Being a three cylinder 1.5, the car's engine and exhaust makes almost no noise at low RPM. In sport mode at nearly 150 kmph, the engine purred. The car isn't the fastest 3 series, obviously enough, it pumps out roughly 134 bhp. The throttle held back for the first second I put my foot down with an empty stretch in front of me, but when the horses did kick in, I was glued to my seat. The car is quick but what you need to be focusing on is how refined it feels. It isn't strained no matter how hard you go on it.

The steering response and feel was great. High-speed lane changes went almost unnoticed by the two passengers riding with me. The car more or less absorbed potholes and the suspension felt soft on economy mode but stiffened up in sport mode.

The finesse and refinement BMW put into this simple yet elegant 318i is something Dhaka-City daily drivers have been waiting for.

MOHAMMAD AKIB NAWAZ

GERMAN PRODUCT, BANGLADESHI HEART

Executive Motors Limited

Interview with Dewan Sajid Afzal, Managing Director, Executive Motors Limited

How long has Executive Motors been in operation in Bangladesh, and how has the market for luxury automobiles changed from when you first started out and now?

Executive Motors started its journey in 2003 in Bangladesh. When we introduced BMW in Bangladesh, our potential customers were not aware of luxury cars with advanced safety features that were technically robust cars in terms performance and comfort. Now our customer are aware and has a focus on eco-friendly and fuel efficient luxury cars. That is what has changed the concept of luxury cars, then and now. BMW in Bangladesh ensures all those developments are reflected.

Kindly pinpoint three unique brand values that make life easier for you, as a distributor of BMW in Bangladesh.

BMW has a long history and heritage. We are turning 100 years in 2016.

During these 100 years the research and craftsmanship we put into our cars are unparalleled. BMW is leading the automotive industry in terms of technology, in terms of innovation and in terms of luxury. Our clients understand this and that is why they prefer BMW over other cars in the luxury segment. To top it all off, we offer 5 years of free service, maintenance and parts to all our clients with every new purchase.

How is the perception of German luxury cars in the local automotive market at present?

Germany has a long history of building efficient luxury cars. While BMW is leading the pack in Bangladesh, there are a few other German brands available in the market. Due to the goodwill of German technology and efficiency, the market is very receptive towards the German car makers.

What are some of the problems



you have faced in marketing the often expensive, often niche cars that are made by BMW? How did you overcome them?

Cars are expensive due to the high cost of import and taxes. Sometimes

our clients are unaware of the high import duty prevailing in the market. This is where we have to educate them, not just on the local cost structures but on the values and unique propositions of owning a BMW. Our positives, our technological superior-

ity and our design dominance far outweighs the negative impact of high price due to the import costs. So clients are easily swayed once they see the bigger picture and test drive our cars.

Which is the most popular among all the BMW series that are sold here?

In terms of sedan cars, 5 series is very popular. The X5 is very popular with clients wanting an SUV.

The market for luxury vehicles is highly dependent on the political scenario of the country. How has your operations fluctuated because of political instability? On that note, has any customer ever brought in a BMW to the workshop for repair after suffering hartal damage?

Not necessarily. Political scenario has relatively been stable for the last few years in Bangladesh. All the key vari-

ables point towards a positive outlook for the country economically eventually. This has created a confidence both in the consumers and the corporate sector. We are also experiencing the benefits of this.

How do you usually set a sales target for BMW vehicles in Bangladesh?

The sales target for each market is done on a year to year basis with BMW AG in Germany.

What's next for Executive Motors in 2016?

As you know, BMW is turning 100 years in 2016. This is a very big triumph for BMW as a company and for Executive Motors as a BMW importer. We plan on celebrating the centennial with the launch of a few new models and introduction of engine variations in 2016. Our fans and customers have a lot to look forward to from us in 2016. It will be a very big year for us hopefully.