



BUTTONS BUTTONS & more buttons

Automotive technology
in 2016, in Bangladesh

■ SHAER REAZ

In 1885, Karl Benz devised a contraption that had the basic workings of the modern internal combustion engine and drivetrain – multiple strokes, pistons, crankshaft and a basic gearing mechanism to transfer the power. More importantly, it used gasoline as the chief source of energy, and the viability of the Karl Benz Patent Motorwagen made petrol the fuel for mass-mobility.



The latest automotive tech tries to make driving safer, more comfortable and entertaining. Which seems like a weird way to go about it: how do you drive safer with so many screens to look at and buttons to fiddle with?

The Benz Motorwagen might not even vaguely represent the modern car in any way (it had three wheels instead of four, a lever instead of a steering wheel, and no body to speak of), but it kicked off a two century long revolution in the way people move. Over the course of time, the automobile was upgraded and re-thought, ticking off boxes of requirements that the consumers presented to manufacturers, and the changes in turn affecting the way the consumers lived their lives.

In Bangladesh, the automobile has been around in small numbers since the early 1900's, when the British Empire

brought Fords and Austins into the country to serve the nobility overseeing Bengal. Since then, the market has only grown larger and larger as income rose, and in post 2000's Bangladesh, a rapidly ballooning middle class pushed the market for automobiles into uncharted territories, selling more than ever before despite a restrictive tax on imported cars. At the same time, the worldwide car market adapted and morphed as it always did to changing regulations, changing consumer perceptions and most importantly, changing technology. Because of the needlessly restrictive displacement based tax placed

on imported cars and the erratic regulations with regard to hybrids and electric vehicles, Bangladesh is seemingly getting left behind.

Or is it? Bangladesh, especially in the brand new market, is slowly catching up to the rest of the world in terms of options, technology and safety systems on offer when you go to purchase a vehicle. We're still lagging behind, but not by much. At this point, all that is limiting our access to high-tech vehicles is the pricing: basic options taken for granted abroad require a fortune to obtain in Bangladesh.

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