

In Bangladesh, the roads are not meant for every Tamim, Dip and Harun. There is only one way you can truly utilise roads and reach your destination intentionally, fashionably late. That is if you're a government official, child of a government official or close relative of that child of a government official. Only then can you be like Moses and have the wrong side of the roads part for you.

For the rest of us, we have to suffer the jams in the cacophonous silence of horns blaring needlessly. We can't resort to our own cars because most of us still do not have our own cars. We have to plead with the men in green and yellow vehicles to take us before our boss fires us. Oh, how I hate taxis.

A couple of years ago, ride sharing started to become a thing. With so many cars and bikes helplessly heading empty to a similar destination, it only made sense to use them for lifts. Pathao and Uber entered the scene offering bikes and cars respectively. Now using your phone you can avail a nearby car or bike and be off to enjoy your time in traffic. Bonus includes no haggling over fare. The days of hearing taxi guys suggesting, 'Mama, gimme 150 taka, your headphones and socks over the meter fare or I won't go' are over for now.

Except, it is not all sunshine and rainbows. Ride sharing has its quirks and my 'Almost Useful Life Hacks' attempt to almost make you a pro at traveling in someone else's car.

### When to call

The GPS loves fooling around. It's like that annoying friend or sibling who will repeatedly offer you that toy/chocolate bar/your phone and pull it away as you reach out. That too, multiple times thinking it is the funniest thing since Trump started speaking at political rallies.

The GPS will fool you into thinking the car or bike you want is right there near your house. The next second it is shown somewhere in Zimbabwe instead of Dhanmondi. But, there is a trick to making the GPS pin down everything



accurately. You go to the toilet for any last minute tinkling and suddenly the universe aligns everything for you. Your ride is not only found, it is right there at your doorstep, calling you. It becomes a mad dash to wash your hands and answer the phone.

### Every Uber is white or silver

Apparently, Uber has cars of many different colours. Even officials from Uber have insisted they have red, blue and even a green car on their service. But all I ever get is white or silver. And unless you know your cars, all look like badly cooked dumplings because most of these cars are just that. But unlike dumplings, the insides usually do not smell of onions.

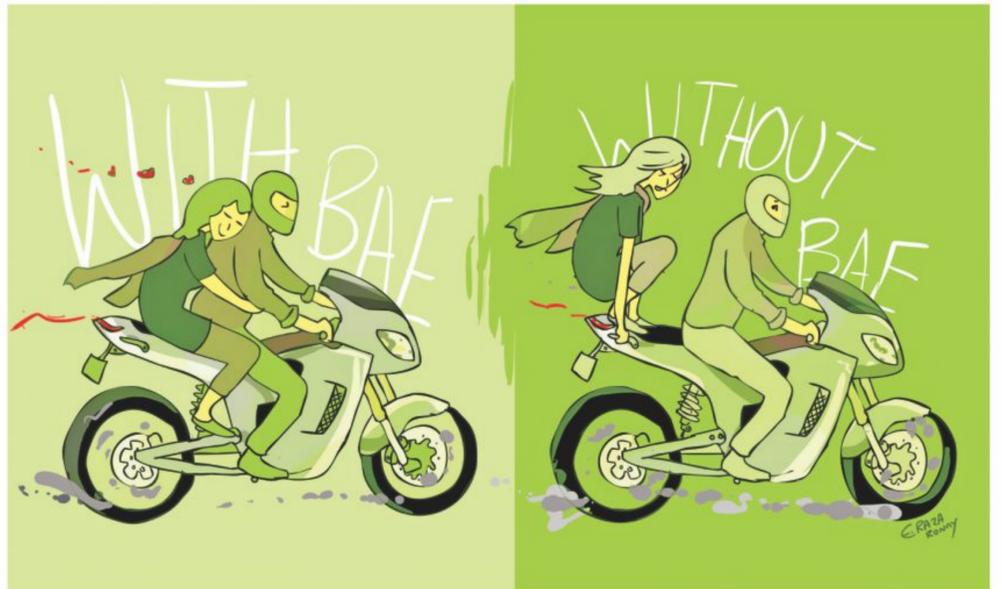
To identify quickly, I have started asking drivers about stickers, scratchers, dents on their cars. This is easier with UberX as most cars are older and often a little dinged up. With bikes though, you need to stand around waving your hands in the air like you just don't care till they spot you.

### Riding discomfort

When it comes to bikes, people have different preferences. I personally like the sports bikes despite these having minimal cushioning for the rear passenger bums. They have better suspension that does not bottom out like standard commuter bikes. As a result, your backbone feels less compressed after a ride across our potholed streets.

As for cars, it's simple. Pick the right car as long as it is not a Toyota Probox. That's the car that looks like a coffin on wheels for small dogs. You know for a fact you will probably have to wait in

# HOW TO SURVIVE RIDE SHARING WITHOUT BREAKING YOUR BACK ... AND OTHER TIPS



CARTOON: E R RONNY

traffic for quite a while. A Probox has the worst rear seat in existence. That is because it was designed to carry dead livestock instead of passengers. With a CNG kit fitted behind, the passengers have to deal with a completely upright rear seat and legroom fit for a 3-month-old baby. I once tried lying down during a three-hour trip during heavy rain. The typically polite driver offered me cold wet wipes as compensation.

### How to sit on a bike

This is a tip for the ladies that use motorbikes regularly. They aren't particularly comfortable with hugging a new, unknown man that isn't Chris Hemsworth. Their trick is to place a flat purse or bag in between and sit comfortably. I suggested a pillow as it would provide even greater degrees of comfort. Perhaps all the bike sharing

services can take that up as a tip. On a more realistic note, SAM (Share A Motorcycle) is starting a new service called Pink SAM used by the women, for the women.

### What next

Piggy Uber could be a thing. Even with motorbikes, I still spend an inordinate amount of time sitting in traffic. The service could round up all the non-oily bodybuilders in the country and start a piggyback service for people traveling short distances. You just hop on someone's back and off you go. For longer distances through narrow alleys, a service involving those two wheeled contraptions called mobility scooters used by very fat cops in the western world.

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ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

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