

ENGINE BLOCK
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Best of the '1 Crore Club' And a few underdogs

The year 2017 has been pretty interesting for petrolheads in Bangladesh. We really do not have any roads left, yet we still had some super cool cars hitting the streets. Sometimes, those cars literally hit the streets.

Here's a rundown of the best available vehicles to help you join the 1 Crore Club.

THE USUAL USUAL

BMW and Mercedes are old rivals that have been playing a rather muted tug of war in the Bangladeshi market. They have been joined by Audi (officially) just a couple months ago. Their range topping 7 Series, S Class and A8 have been rolling around for a while, both from the official dealer as well as from the gray market. The latter being the one where you usually never get any warranty. Car goes kaput, it remains kaput!

These are the luxury barges costing upwards of 2 crore takas despite being in favourable tax brackets. The BMW for example is a 2000cc car meaning taxes are low-ish. It's a massive one with a small turbo charged engine pumping out 258hp good enough for a 6.2 second run to 100kmph. That's enough to quickly leave most other cars behind till the next traffic jam. Which, incidentally, is thirty feet later.

The other cars have similar power packages while the Audi A8 sold were all hybrids. These cars are all about the massive amount of space inside, enough leather that decimated entire cow families and electrical gadgets to put an average house to shame.

UNDERDOG

The just released 2017 Honda Civic Turbo is a 1.5 litre car delivering 174 very useful horsepower. It originally sold at 42 lakhs and is a joy to drive. While quite big, I found the dimensions easy to point and carve through our very congested city. It has massive amounts of space for five passengers, looks terribly sharp and handles superbly for an everyday car. It easily trumps every dullsville Toyota Allion/Premio people generally buy for nearly the same money.

ELECTRIC SHEEP

Electric is big thanks to the guy that promises us all a ride to space. Provided we shower him with more money than our government uses to build unusable bridges.

Elon Musk has done one thing very well though and that is Tesla, specifically the Tesla Model S. It's an all-electric car capable of an average 350km on one charge for their lowest powered car. You get more than 300hp and tonnes of torque to make it go ridiculously fast without any noise. They even have a term for the high power mode — Ludicrous Mode.

It's a brutal, unearthly, chest compressing acceleration previously enjoyed by the crew of the Starship Enterprise. The range makes it a promising, daily driven alternative in a beautiful country with rolling mountain roads and women singing from the clouds. Which incidentally makes Bangladesh not so ideal a situation.

Yet, we already have at least two such

cars in the city. Price to bring one in is around 2.5 crores. The biggest party trick is that it can drive by itself even on highways requiring some additional input by the driver. But, no one is brave enough to test it on our roads.

While it generally looks like an elongated jellybean, it has a certain minimalistic flair accentuated by that long sloping hood reminiscent of sportscars of the '70s. A very big deal these days is having touchscreens in cars. This thing has touchscreens for everything. There are no knobs or dials for your audio, heating, cooling, and massage. Just massive glowing screens. Children will love it.

UNDERDOGS

We have hundreds of Honda Vezel hybrids on the market already along with quite a few Toyota Prius and Toyota Aqua. These are generally petrol-powered motors with support by electric motors for huge fuel savings. These are also significantly cheaper at under 35 lakhs. The Aqua sells for as low as 13 lakhs and gives a city mileage of more than 20kmpl. Following close on the heels of that interest in the local market, BMW and Mercedes hybrids are rolling in.

RACE TO THE SUNSET

The last couple of years have seen an influx of sportscars. I can already hear everyone asking, 'Where are the roads?' That did not stop the Nissan GTR (a.k.a. Skyline R35) from coming in by the boat loads. Albeit the boats being rather

single car shaped. A base model GTR is about 2.95 crores. The base model is a 3.8 litre V6.

Our friends at CarHouse have sold six in various states of tune. Someone else also brought in the range topping Nismo version reported to deliver about 590bhp. Remember, this is a four-wheel drive car with enough handling gadgetry to almost make it sentient.

Everybody loves the idea of a sportscar. It looks fast, cool and makes an owner feel like a highly sought after public figure. This is where the Ford Mustang comes in.

The year saw the launch of the first two brand new Ford Mustangs in Bangladesh. It is the king of hype city, as the Mustang name is associated with romantic imagery of freedom, power and a liberal expression of self.

The two that came in here though are the base versions aiming to appeal to youthful, slightly more planet conscious people. It comes with a four-cylinder 2.4 litre engine capable of 320bhp. That's not a small figure but traditionally Mustangs are known to have big, stonking, Polar-bear-life worrying V8 engines. The one sold here cost an eye watering 1.8 crores thanks to our lovely tax structure.

In the land of the orange Trump, where this is made, it cost a much more manageable 21 lakh. Which explains why one of the two cars is still lying in the showroom. Seems you can put a price on happiness!

Photo: Rahin Sadman Islam