

TEST DRIVE

2018 PROTON PREVE

Made in Bangladesh should we be proud?



While the unregistered Proton was being delivered to me for the test drive, a traffic sergeant stopped it to check for papers. I received a call because the traffic sergeant wanted to verify we were not on a joy ride. The polite man and I talked for over ten minutes discussing cars and the chaos on our roads. And when I mentioned the car was assembled in Bangladesh, he was surprised. Most people associate 'Made in Bangladesh' with household electronics, bicycles and tea-stall butter buns. Few know the Malaysian brand's existence of several decades in Bangladesh, much less their current assembly plant.

What is it?
The Proton Preve is a compact sedan based on a concept styled by the famed design



house, Italdesign. It features sharp creases and a raked profile giving it a visual impression of shoving through the air. The Proton has a lean shape similar to what Honda did with their City and previous Civics, but minus the

flair in the details. As for dimensions, it is slightly wider, longer and taller than your standard Toyota Allion, seen all over our congested roadways.
How does it drive?
The Preve is powered by a 1.6 turbo giving out 138 HP @ 5000 RPM and about 151 lb/ft of torque early on in the rev range. It accelerates a bit lazily and needs a hard shove of the foot to get moving fast. The power is delivered through an efficient CVT gearbox. The suspension setup is tweaked by Lotus as promoted by a subtle badge at the back. By tweaked, I do not mean race car but rather a firmer, tauter ride than similar cars. It will not wallow. The bumps are soaked smoothly while turns are less wobbly than a similar car

like a Toyota Axio.
What's it like on the inside?
The Preve (pronounced Pre-vay because you are likely having difficulty figuring it out) is plenty spacious. Cloth seats are comfortable and can seat five adults easily. The rear seat, while thickly padded, is a flat bench so more people can squeeze in without worrying about a hard centre hump. The dash is softly padded but there are a lot of dark colours. While well-specced and spacious, the interior material quality isn't up to par with its competitors from Honda or Toyota. The storage bins and lids feel flimsy and wobbly upon opening, although it is far better than the poor but spacious interior of the oddly shaped Nissan Almera.

All the switchgear is within reach, including a strange but not unwelcome central lock button placed in the, err, centre of the dash. Usually we see it only on the driver's door.

While it is a nice place to be in, the insulation could have been better. Plenty of road noise comes in followed by the typical whine from that CVT. Upside of this is for the enthusiasts who will enjoy that light whooshing spool of the turbo. It is faint but there.

Safety
There are six airbags including curtain bags up high to protect you (especially your head) from side impact. ABS, EBD and traction control helps keep things in line. Even on a muddy wet section, the systems helped keep the car from twisting away and running over my photographer.

Unusual, but mildly cool, is a dashboard info display that tells you if any bulb is out as well as the location. And to wrap it up, it has a five-star ANCAP safety rating.

Parting thoughts
Although the design is getting a little dated, it still looks sharp and will likely age well. It has lots of space (508 litres of boot space), adequate power, loaded with features for convenience and safety. That ANCAP rating is a big plus as safety is of the utmost importance. The interior fit and finish does need to improve to be on par with competitors. It rides well but suffers from road noise when pushed. What power it does have, it delivers well with a 0-100kmph time of just under 10 seconds. We were not able to fully test the fuel efficiency but most user forums report an

average 11-12kmpl. That's based on mostly moving city traffic combined with highway routes. Our stagnant traffic conditions will really eat into that figure.

VERDICT

Let's address the 'Assembled in Bangladesh' tag. While that phrase should fill our Bangladeshi souls with pride, many people connect it to an image of cardboard boxes. But the Proton is a rather good product. Where it falls short is the pricing, thanks to our taxation rules. At this range, the recon market with second hand cars offers too much competition. The Preve is a great start but if the government does not develop better domestic production tariffs, this might not go very far.

SPECS

Engine: 1.6 litre 4-cylinder turbo petrol (138 HP @5000 RPM, 151 lb-ft)
Transmission: CVT with 7 ratio paddle-shift, FWD.
Safety: 6 airbags, ABS EBD, Brake Assist and Traction Control, 5-star ANCAP rating.
Features: 16-inch wheels, push start, immobiliser, parking sensors, cruise control, touchscreen infotainment, in-car Wi-Fi, multi-function steering wheel, water repellent fabric seats, auto rain sensor, auto headlight sensor.
Price: Starting from TK 25,50,000.
For details, contact PHP Automobiles Ltd.

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AUTO NEWS

BMW redesigns the best-seller – the new 3 series

The all new 2019 BMW 3 series is longer, wider and taller than the outgoing generation, and incorporates the familial design elements that were debuted on the larger 5 and 7 series. Full-LED headlights flank the larger kidney grills, and contoured lines tighten up the overall shape. Expect the range of 3-4-6 cylinder motors running on petrol and diesel, along with hybrid powertrain.

The biggest departure from the current 3-series is the availability of x-Drive,

BMW's all-wheel drive system. First catching headlines with the current generation M5, BMW's x-Drive system shows a commitment towards AWD that has been giving enthusiasts reasons to bicker. BMW's always been a RWD focused brand, and this sudden change of track have some people scratching their heads. It's all for the sake of efficiency though.

We'll bring you more news when Executive Motors Ltd., the local BMW dealer, brings in the new 3.



Infiniti builds a street racer – Q60 Project Black S

Infiniti keeps teasing the world with a hot road racer every year—the latest is this, the Q60 Project Black S, a rakish coupe with aero inspired by the custom car world. The bulbous body hides a hybrid drivetrain test-bed for Renault and Infiniti, yet another nudge towards Infiniti's electrification plans. The petrol part is proper performance—400 HP from its VR30 twin-turbo V6, while the electric part uses F1 tech like recuperating heat and kinetic energy.



At the moment, the Q60 is just a concept. However, among the recent concepts Infiniti has debuted, it's the closest to production.

CAR SPOTTING



THE YELLOW FELLOWS

PHOTOS: SHADMAN AL SAMEE

Yellow is a colour that most Bengalis associate with taxi-cabs, but on the right car with the right proportions, yellow is up there with red as one of the most evocative colours you can have on a car. This week, we give tribute to the brave souls who aren't afraid of a little colour in their lives, beginning with a super clean, super rare Mitsubishi FTO. Dope!

