



The automobile market in Bangladesh is gradually growing bigger, with customers now having a greater choice in cars. Following is a list of ten cars that are currently available in our market: new, recon, and restored. These ten cars will surely put a smile on your face for being quirky, fun and different.

SUZUKI SWIFT VS KIA PICANTO

The new Swift is a gorgeous little hatchback. Do not let your 'Made in India' stigma dissuade you from recognising what is actually a brilliant car to drive. Swifts have always been fun because they handle nicely and the manual gearbox offers crisp shifts similar to older Hondas, which is high praise for a car like this. The 1.2 litre engine delivers 87 bhp and is priced at Tk 13.75 lakhs.

It is by far the best affordable, brand new car. There are cheaper options, but those are neither fun to drive, nor look good at. The Kia Picanto (around Tk 16 lakhs) is another lovely hatch that few people think about, because, well, Kia. Kia of Bangladesh seems to stay quietly in the shadows despite having great cars on offer. Refined interior, spacious, 1.2 litres, and drives well. It has the perfect squat dimensions to scoot through tight spaces.

HONDA CIVIC TURBO VS TOYOTA MEH BLEH PLURGH

You read that right. A moderately large, yet stylish sedan is the best compromise for family outings and a little bit of weekend fun for yourself. The Toyota Allion/Premio (now referred to as Meh Bleh Plurgh) are not for the latter.

While cheap to run and comfortable, it is not even remotely fun, offering a bland driving experience similar to being in a well-oiled wheelchair. But it gets the job done. Prices vary around the mid to high Tk 30 lakh range for a recent 2017 model. Also, these are only available recon/donated (a.k.a. used).

A 2018 Honda Civic on the other hand looks like a future concept with lots of slashes and pointy bits in the styling to suggest an angry mechanical bee, robot or dragon. Your pick!

Very techy with sophisticated interiors and a fantastic driving experience thanks to tight handling and a lovely 182 bhp 1.5 litre turbo-charged engine. Price hovers around Tk 40 lakhs depending on your level of kit.

BMW 7 SERIES HYBRID VERSUS THE X2

Two Bimmers to choose from because they just happen to be the highest selling premium

automakers in our market. It helps that their cars all have engines that fall into just the right tax brackets for Bangladesh. The 7 Series flagship is massive and the recently released Hybrid comes with a 2 litre engine pumping out 326 hp. Priced from just about Tk 2 crores, it's a lot of money to spend, but saves on fuel costs.

Their newly brought in X2 is 'cheap,' starting at Tk 85 lakhs. It looks like a jacked up hatchback with a wide stance. An upgraded hot hatch for grownups? The 1.5 litre engine pumps out a brisk 140 bhp. It looks sportier and aggressive than it is, which, in the end, is

AWD. The twin scrolling turbo eliminates lag, ensuring you get almost all the power the moment you stab the throttle. This banana shaped car is brutally fast and sounds delicious with its burbling, popping, rasping exhaust. Mercedes of Bangladesh is rather secretive about prices, but it goes above Tk 1.45 crores.

HAVAL H9 VERSUS THE LAND ROVER DEFENDER

The Chinese startup has a lot of automakers worried. It is growing big in the Australian market where the terrain is extremely harsh. The H9 is their range-topping SUV, very, very

ing them for sale. These are terrific cars to own and drive, as long as they do not break down. Prices go from Tk 6-7 lakhs to, well, a lot. This is the epitome of cool after all.

TOYOTA AQUA VERSUS A RICKSHAW

Want to save the world, but feel conflicted with your desire for comfort? It's cheap at around Tk 13-14 lakhs and economical to run. Sort of. Dealers will tell you about getting mileages of 20km/l and beyond and if you believe that, you are in for some sore disappointment. In our often gridlocked city, you can get about 12-14km/l easily if you drive carefully, which is terrific. The best I manage



what most BMW owners here need one to be.

AUDI A3 VERSUS MERCEDES CLA45 AMG

110 bhp from a 1.2 litre engine; do not let that fool you into thinking this will be a slouch. The power delivery is unlike another car with similar power figures. This German beauty is a bit compact in dimensions. Think Toyota Corolla. But it has a far, far more upscale interior than its price bracket of around Tk 51 lakhs.

If you want to really stand out, there is nothing quite like the Mercedes CLA45 AMG Shooting Brake. It's a wagon, and while our country is not as favourable to wagons as Europe, it is pretty. And fast. The 2.0 litre turbocharged engine pumps out 355 bhp, and all that power goes to the ground using

similar to the outgoing Land Cruiser. It is surprisingly well built, inside and out, with premium materials throughout. Where the two SUVs differ are in engine size and prices. The H9 is a 2.0 litre turbo pumping out 241 bhp and 250lb-ft of torque, mated to a rather smooth 8 speed auto. Priced at Tk 70 lakhs, it undercuts the Land Cruiser Prado quite a bit, which easily crosses Tk 1 crore with similar specs. But it has a bigger, naturally-aspirated engine of either a 2.7 litre petrol or 2.8 litre diesel.

And the Land Rover? Well, the Defender is a cult classic. It looks rugged and recognisable anywhere in the world. And it looks equally at ease, whether at a movie premier or waist deep in the muddy waters of Africa (or Bashundhara during monsoon). It is an icon and many workshops and individuals are buying old Defenders and completely rebuild-

on regular petrol engines is 7-8km/l. It's a cute, smart hatchback that can easily eat four adults. It is basic though, and ride refinement is not very high. Also, if you get stuck in a waterlogged area, your electronics under the rear seat will suffer. So try not to drown. As for the pros, it does ride softly, but feels nippy and fun enough for regular city driving.

If you really want to save the environment, ride a rickshaw. This is Bangladesh after all. There is never a dearth of rickshaws. Just that running costs per kilometre is surprisingly higher by rickshaw than a Toyota Aqua.

All the detailed local reviews of the cars mentioned are or will be available on The Daily Star's Shift.

Photo provided by Farhan Ahmed, Shadman Al Samee/Shift, The Daily Star