

2020 BMW 218i Gran Coupé

RAHBAR AL HAQ

What is it?

For the purists, it's sacrilege. For BMW, it's a dive into competitive waters. For the rest, the BMW 218i Gran Coupé is a front-wheel, compact luxury sedan and contender in the same class as Audi A3 and Mercedes CLA.

A front wheel Beemer?

Yes, front wheel. Now, despite being under the "2" badge, the Gran Coupé shares more with the 1 Series hatch rather than the 2 Series RWD coupé, and features styling cues liberally borrowed from the 8 series. It is designed as a sedan for markets like China and USA



ARB traction control system does a decent job of hiding its front-wheel pedigree, ironing out sharp turns, and making sure the car behaves into a speedy corner. The adjustable suspension balance out most of the body roll in sport mode, though hitting a pothole in this mode is not recommended. The three-cylinder engine prefers to keep quiet, but will raise its voice to a heavy drone when you push it. For a "sporty" sedan, there is an ample

How's the ride?

Depends on where you are seating. The front seats are comfortable with adjustable thigh support while the steering wheel is wrapped in genuine leather. The Sensatec upholstery is a bit stickier compared to the real thing, but the extra grip does help to keep you planted to your seats. Riders in the back get some nice attention to details such as individual reading lights and twin USB charging ports, tough legroom can become an issue if the people seating at the front are any taller than six feet. The hard-plastic seat backs mean the rear passengers can't even push in their knees to gain a few centimeters of extra legroom, while the sloping roofline around the C pillar limits headspace. To BMW's credit, they have removed a chunk of the rear headliner to create some additional headroom, though people around 5 feet 11 will have their hair scraped. There's a 12volt power socket in the trunk for all your picnic needs, along with the first aid kit in the event you need to mend some basic injuries. As for mileage, the official Euro rating is little over 7 kmpl in combined city and

highway driving, though staff at Executive Motors claimed it takes around TK 1,700 worth of fuel for the car to travel from Dhaka to Chittagong.

Verdict

If you are in the market for a basic yet sporty compact from a premium brand, this is a strong candidate. It has everything needed to survive the Dhaka traffic with enough fizz for spirited drives on the open roads.

Specs

Engine: 1.5-liter TwinPower Turbo 3-cylinder (140 HP, 220 Nm)

Transmission: Seven-speed dual-clutch Steptronic, FWD

Safety: 5 airbags, ABS with EBD and Brake Assist, ESP, Traction Control, BAS, first aid kit, park assist, rear view camera.

Features: "Illuminated Berlin" ambient lighting, panoramic roof, daytime running lights with LED front lighting, BMW i-Drive infotainment system, multifunction leather steering wheel,

Price: Starting from TK 68,00,000,

For details, contact Executive Motors Ltd.

Photo: Nayem Shaan

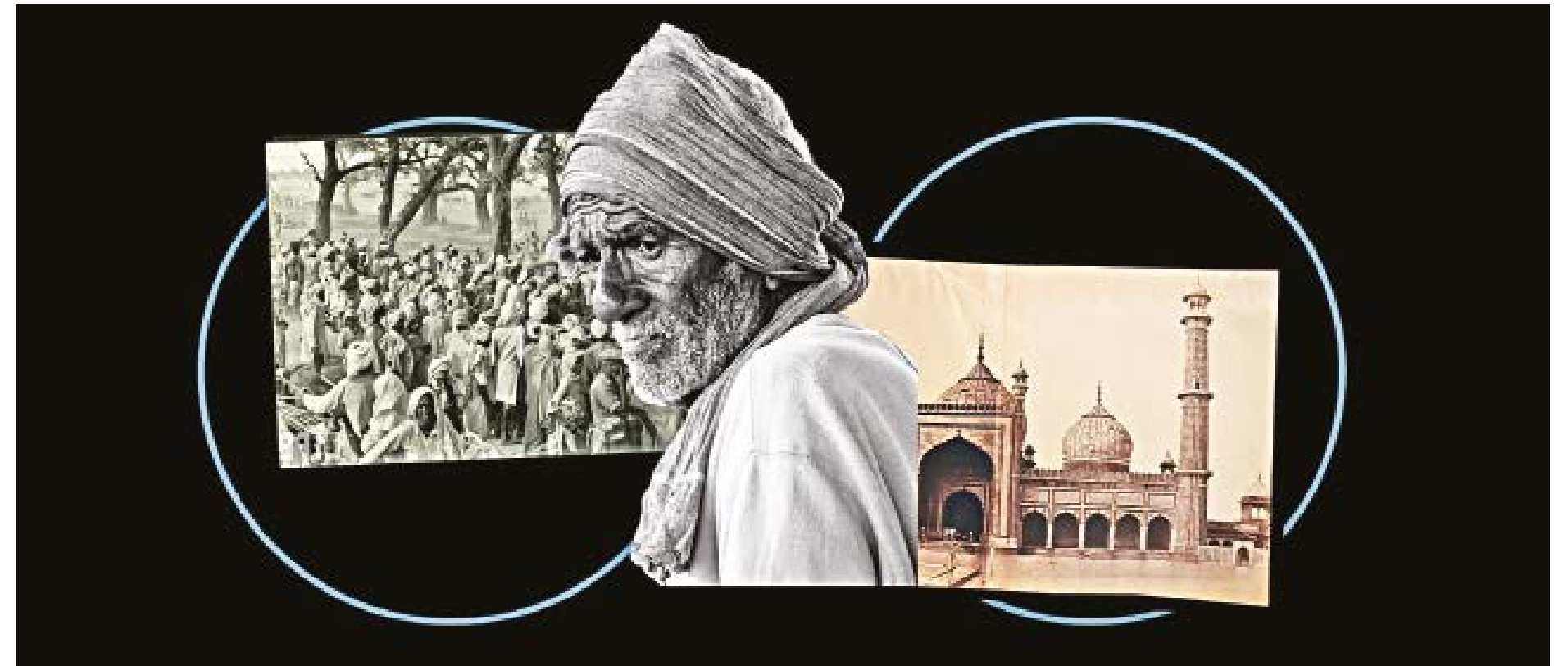
where people don't like hatchbacks. Which makes sense in Bangladesh because despite how good a hatch is for our tight roads, we don't seem to want one. The resulting mixture is an entry-level C-segment executive sedan, aimed at people looking for a slice of the German pie on a budget.

How does it drive?

Fun, for what it is. The turbo takes a second to spool up to when you floor it, but the following delivery of low-end torque that does provide a satisfying jolt of acceleration. Hitting triple digit in light traffic is possible, provided you find yourself enough room to floor it. The car's



amount of ground clearance, allowing the car to drive over most speed bumps with ease. Great for Bangladesh because we build speedbreakers to train mountain climbers.



73 years later, partition victims find their way back in virtual reality

ZARIF FAIAZ

Rabin Dasgupta was only 16 years old when he moved from a quaint village in Jamalpur, to Kolkata, towards an uncertain future, in August of 1947. A student of painting-coming from an affluent family-Rabin would find himself hit hard by poverty in the years that followed and the painter would resort to selling hand-made dolls to support his family in a city that was not his own.

Seventy-three years later, Kolkata has made Rabin Dasgupta one of its own, but memories of his lost homeland still haunt him. "You could see the Brahmaputra river, and beyond that, you could see the Garo hills from faraway. Once we had crossed it, we didn't realise it was too late to return," he fondly recalls.

Rabin Dasgupta is one among the fourteen million people displaced in Punjab and Bengal during the partition of 1947. At the stroke of midnight on 14th August 1947, India would see itself divided along the Radcliffe line. And communal riots would push fourteen million to uproot their entire lives almost overnight and head for bleak futures in the newly created countries.

After seven decades, many of them are getting a chance to get a glimpse of their ancestral lands once again, thanks to a virtual reality project by a team of tech and history enthusiasts from Oxford University.

Project Dastaan

The idea for Project Dastaan was conceived in 2018, when two of its co-founders, Oxford go-er Sparsh Ahuja and Ameena Malak, sat down over a cup of

coffee one fine day and exchanged their grandparents' stories of partition.

They realised that their grandparents had travelled almost identical journeys but in the opposite direction. And they both yearned to go back home. But old age, political tension between countries and the traumatic experience of the past made it difficult for them to go back to their ancestral lands.

They brought in their friends, Sam Dalrymple and Saadia Gardezi, both experts on South Asian history and politics from Oxford, and thus began the flight of Project Dastaan.

Behind the scenes

Sam Dalrymple, Co-founder and Project Lead of Project Dastaan, gives us a glimpse of what really goes into recreating the experiences in VR.

"We begin by interviewing the partition witnesses. We then use our volunteer networks [in India and Pakistan] to track down these locations and try to find any areas which may have survived. 72 years later, a lot of these places have changed. Both countries have industrialised massively since 1947.

"We then edit it and turn it into a full 6 minutes [360 VR] experience of those places as they exist today.

Sparsh Ahuja, CEO and Founder, sheds light on how the project has evolved to focus more on outreach and education surrounding partition.

"In order to educate people, we can't just show them these spaces; we got to contextualise the whole experience. So, we came up with Child of Empire. Child

of Empire isn't just a 360 experience of these places. Instead, it's an interactive, animated journey through the partition as if you were a child actually migrating. So, you're not just watching the experience of migration; you are the migrant. Any action you take along the journey will influence the narrative" he adds.

"In a second area of work, we explore the diversity of the experiences of 1947 Partition across India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in a series of 5 animated episodes. In this exploration of communal and geographical diversity, we explore issues that are pertinent in 1947 and today, i.e. caste, class, religion, language, and gender. The series brings forth lesser-known stories from South Asia.

Partition is often misperceived as just something that concerns India and Pakistan, rather than a mass event that impacted everyone in the region. As an event, it is often thought as limited to the 1940s, but migrations continued into the 1960s and borders of India and Pakistan only became more solid in the 1960s.

The Bangladesh chapter

In Bangladesh, discourses regarding partition and its displaced communities from these part of the subcontinent are often painfully absent under the shadow of our liberation war in 1971.

"The first issue is that since the 1970s, Bangladeshi has not really attached its identity to 1947, and does not celebrate an anniversary of independence from the British Empire. Thus academic study,

and literary works of the region, also don't touch upon 1947 or comes to the topic as a secondary afterthought to 1971. Establishing the field of Partition studies in Bangladesh is secondary to understanding the "other Partition" of the country when it gained its independence/ liberation from Pakistan in 1971.

The other issue is that of the intense violence that the partition of Punjab saw, leading to it becoming a greater part of the oral history of Partition, as well as constant tensions between India and Pakistan along the border over Kashmir.

The way back

"We are being driven by someone in power. We are like the pawns of a checkboard. Partition was forced onto us," as Tarapada Dey puts it. Tarapada, now 87, is a retired Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax in Kolkata. He moved to Kolkata from Dhaka in 1947 with his family and was left without a permanent residence for almost a decade.

Like Tarapada, Manjari Dasgupta, who migrated to Kolkata from Jamalpur, also recounts the partition days. "We stayed by the temple for seven days, you know. So many houses were burnt. The thought still gives me goosebumps," she says.

Project Dastaan's VR experience might whisk Tarapada, Manjari and Rabin to their ancestral lands, but it can never give back what they lost. The memories, however, might be the only things left to salvage now.

See online for the extended story