



PHOTOS: AHBAAR MOHAMMAD

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Honda FD2 Type R

AHBAAR MOHAMMAD

Honda has always been an unconventional marque; Their first car was a maniacal chain-driven roadster with a threshold exceeding the redline of 9500 rpm. It was a car made by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts.

What won on a Sunday sold on Monday, as Honda went on to cash in on their formula one triumphs through dealerships and the telly back in Japan (google Honda Prelude Ayrton Senna ad).

While you're at it, look for a video of Senna testing (read: thrashing) an N1 spec EF9 civic equipped with a then newly christened VTEC engine, a technology we all know and (some) love. The stripped-



out civic, screaming past the conventional redline for a commuter car for the masses while being thrown around Suzuka, at the helm of an instrument of precision driving that is Senna.

And thus kindled subconsciously relating the humble civic to an almost derogative pedigree of "Boy racer". Lone kanjo civic tribes ticking off the police through a behaviour of driving—that can be only described as antisocial—through Osaka's highways definitely didn't help either. Meanwhile, Honda figured out the marketing aspect: Type R, an array of thoroughbred sports cars. Starting with the NSX-R, followed by the Integra Type R, a cult classic in its own right. The civic



received the red-blooded and badged Type R treatment eventually, and the rest is automotive history.

It took two generations of the Civic Type R to metamorphose into a fully grown sedan, from the nimble EK9 hatchback to the FD2 Type R. Type R's being wolves in sheep's clothing were never easy to spot to the untrained eye, contrary to the extroverted, outgoing Civic Type R. The FD2 Type R hints ever



so slightly to its athletic prowess; starting with the subtly integrated aero clad front bumper and rear diffuser. The biggest red-badged flags, perhaps, are the rear wing and the red Brembos. The interior coyly hints to the Type R DNA through the Recaro bucket seats, the tachometer and

the aluminium gear knob, along with an individual production-specific numbered plaque out of 13,000 approximate units.

Sajeed Bin Sulaiman's 2010 FD2 Civic Type R is 1 of just 3 FD2R's in Bangladesh; the 11,862nd unit draped in Premium White Pearl, a mellower shade of white as opposed to the bright and flat quintessential Type R Championship White. Truth be told, the FD2R was my first foray into the world of Type R through another friend's (small world, huh?) FD2R. A sensory experience that left me in shock and awe. Sensory deprived onboard videos aren't enough to convey the visceral acceleration and sense of speed, leaving me longing for another encounter.

One fateful night long before 2020, on a ride-along with Shaker Bin Sulaiman, Sajeed's younger brother answered my prayers. The civic adheres to the road with levels of adhesion, akin to my fingers accidentally super-glued together. The K20A mated to a six-speed close-ratio gearbox is a match made in automotive heaven as the engine purrs through the stock exhaust with the rowing of gears, all the way to redline.

There's a best motoring youtube video of an FD2 defeating its homogenous sibling, the DC5 Integra Type R, despite being 10 hp deficit around Tsukuba. The stock suspension behaves like an expensive set of bespoke coilovers, which obliges the sport sedan to corner like it's on rails, confidence-inspiring, to say the least, although the drawbacks of coilovers are persistent on Dhaka's roads translating to a harsher ride.

Shaker, being an avid motorsport enthusiast, was always a fan of Honda, as he tells me. Even more so of the FD2R, as he tells me that its reputation has preceded it in his eyes. He relishes the fact that it doesn't garner as much attention as any other flashy sports car; Sans the wing, there really isn't any way for an average joe to deduce the wolf in sheep's clothing in a field of sheep. For now, the civic is bone stock, just as it was intended to be enjoyed from the factory (although I wouldn't be surprised if it was conceived in a lab). Future plans might see the FD2 roaring through a full intake and exhaust upgrade with a standalone ECU, coupled with a lightweight flywheel and a full clutch kit.

Struggles of being a freelancer in Bangladesh

The absurd cost of the so-called comfort

ABDUS SALAM SHAWN

Freelancing is an exciting and growing career path that is gaining more and more popularity in Bangladesh. The term means lending your talents, skills and time in exchange for a payment.

It is a work environment where you are your boss; you work as much or as little as you like, and you work from where you feel comfortable. But it is not all coffee and cakes, especially for freelancers living in a third-world country like Bangladesh.

SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

A freelancer's pursuit of success meets with an unsupportive family, society's erroneous attitude, discouraging financial conditions, frauds, unendurable working conditions, risks of physical, mental afflictions and much more.

Hardships begin the moment a person decides to become a freelancer and the struggle follows them throughout their career. There is an ill-founded belief in the Bangladeshi society that working from a computer and earning from it is no more than a hoax. The society's favouritism for 9-5 jobs has always been an obstacle for freelancers who are just starting. "My father did not believe it was possible to work from a computer and earn money until I gave him 8 thousand takas from one of my very early freelance jobs," says Khaled Saif, a freelance graphic designer and instructor.

Kashim Uddin Masum, a graphic designer and founder of Sofol Freelancer, a popular digital skills learning platform, says that people around freelancers often make it harder for them to go on. "My neighbours would tell my dad that I watched pornography on my computer all night but when the wheels turned and I started making good money, they became my admirers," he said.

BECOMING A FREELANCER

The first thing a freelancer has to decide is what skills he has to learn and that puzzles almost everybody venturing in the freelancing world. There are multitudes of opportunities such as writing/editing, graphic design, web design and development, video editing, marketing, legal consultation and almost anything one might need help with. A freelancer has to choose one or just a few from these available options.

Masum found himself jumping from course to course as he did not know which course suited him best. In his words, "I'd have never taken up graphic design at the beginning if I knew about the steep hardware requirements. I could not afford a powerful pc back then". This lack of knowledge and guidance can be a career killer.

To learn his desired skills, a freelancer has to get into a training institution or purchase online courses. Most

institutional and online courses that are of good quality are priced very highly. Besides, countless fraudulent training institutions make false claims and lure students in only to suck money from them.

Masum once got himself admitted into a web development course. After a few days in, the institution asked him to buy a domain and hosting services to continue the classes that were not mentioned before. He became frustrated and left the course. He added, "There are very few training institutions outside

at Upwork who works three jobs but tries to manage them well so that he can sleep at night. He says, "I know many freelancers who work 24/7". This, consequently, may lead to long-term health problems.

A freelancer has to stay active and respond quickly to clients' messages if he wants to keep a top search result ranking once he establishes a good position in freelancing marketplaces. This leaves little to no time for personal care and jumbles up eating and sleeping schedules.

According to Mr Ahan, giving time to



of Dhaka, and they are not that good". These frauds need to be stopped to preserve freelancers' motivation.

A DIFFICULT PATH

Joining the workforce is just the beginning of the sufferings that lay ahead. A freelancer might need to wait for months to land his first job. When he does, he might need to work according to his client's time zone, who lives on the other side of the world. In Bangladesh's context, the better-paying jobs are mostly from western countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, etc. Most freelancers here have to decide between getting a good night's sleep and working for less money or sacrificing eyesight and earn more along with headache and numbness.

Freelancing is often more demanding than a 9-5 job. Ahamed Nobil Ahan is a top-rated Virtual Support Representative

the family is even more challenging. This can lead to depression and cause severe harm both mentally and physically. He suggests freelancers use the "Vacation" feature that many marketplaces offer, allowing freelancers to have some free time.

LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Two major problems that cripple a freelancer's workflow in Bangladesh are its painfully slow internet connection and frequent power cuts. Masum currently lives in Qatar, and to continue working when he visited Bangladesh, he has spent a fortune to get a broadband internet connection. He is still not satisfied with the connection speed. Although load-shedding almost a thing of the past in the major cities, it is still a concern in the rural areas.

The unavailability of Paypal, the

most prominent global online payment service provider, is another significant disadvantage for freelancers. Mr Masum is a regular user of Paypal, and he cannot use it while in Bangladesh. Paypal is so crucial in the online payment sector that it has become a need, not a privilege. All of whom we interviewed for this article, urged the Government and Bangladesh Bank to try and strike up a deal with Paypal, making it much easier for the freelancers and the general people to make global payments.

EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTIONS

At the other end of the spectrum, working with freelancers from Bangladesh has been a mixed experience for Asikur Rahman, Creative Officer at Ad Hostage, who hires freelancers for digital needs. He often encounters freelancers who lack the skills they boast, cannot meet deadlines and cannot communicate very well. He says, "We now look at their portfolios carefully and try to find the best match for our needs".

According to the ICT Division of the Bangladesh Government, There are 650,000 freelancers in Bangladesh, of which 500,000 are actively working. Bangladesh also ranked 8th in the 2019 Global Gig-Economy Index published by Payoneer. Freelancers in the country are bringing in 850 crore takas annually, and still, freelancing is not given its due respect and attention.

In Ahan's words, "A government job with a BDT 20,000-30,00 salary is worth more to the people of our country than a freelancing job with earnings up to 2-3 lakhs. We even have to go to lengths to verify our earnings when dealing with banks".

THE WAY FORWARD

The government has expressed its will to provide more facilities for freelancers and recently started issuing freelancer ID cards. These cards are meant for helping them get bank loans quickly and solve the identity crisis problem, but there are reports of incidents where these ID cards were not being valued at all.

Being a freelancer in Bangladesh is not easy and the ones doing it are brilliant and valuable people. The government and concerned bodies should get to the bottom of the problems they face, and our society should be more open and accepting of new forms of work and technologies.