

Road trip diary with TOYOTA CROWN ROYAL

AHBAAR MILKY

Most customers purchasing a reconditioned car from Japan usually miss out on what could have been the greatest road trip with their new car. On the last weekend of November, when I got wind of a Toyota Crown Royal pre-ordered by Nippon Auto Trading, with the help of Shift's old friend Zaheer from Nippon Auto Trading, we set about to receive the Royal.

With tickets purchased the night prior, our 7 AM trip to Chittagong presented itself in the form of a non-AC Shyamoli Paribahan bus ride. We were shuttled from the bus counter at Kalabagan to Kamalapur Bus Stand, where we finally boarded at 8:45 AM.

With empty roads ahead, we made swift progress, reaching our halfway stop at Hotel Noorjahan at Cumilla by 11 AM on the dot. What once was a dreamy mirage for weary travellers on the Dhaka-Cumilla Highway now lies as a shell of its former glory. But if you choose to travel with Greenline or any other fancy coach, be sure to stop at Highway Inn - the latest mirage for weary travellers.

Set to stop at Highway Inn on our way back, we resumed our last leg of the trip to the port city of Chittagong, blitzing through the 250 odd kilometres in just under 6 hours as we crossed the city gate at 2 PM. Upon landing at Dampara Bus Stand at GEC More, we rendezvoused with our friend in Chittagong who acted as our local tour guide for the day.

We were determined as ever to go to Highway Inn, but not before collecting the Japanese royalty. We called for an Uber from Chittagong Stadium to Port Car Shed, which arrived within a minute and was cheaper than expected, but I'd like to think we got lucky.

By 4 PM, we reached our final stop, the Chittagong Port Car Shed, where our friend got in touch with his contact and within a few minutes, we caught a glimpse of a pearl white Toyota. The



gates of the port shed opened and welcomed us to a lucky customer's 2016 Toyota Crown Royal Saloon G.

Sold in Japan only, the Crown gives European rivals a run for their leather-wrapped interior's money, with soft-close, lounge-like rear seats with automated shutter blinds, reclinable seats with AC vents, cooled seats, the party piece and swing AC

vents at the front.

Barely able to contain our excitement, we gave a final inspection of all the buttons and features while we checked and raised the tire pressure for our journey back to Dhaka. It must have been our lucky day as we found a full tank of pure Japanese unleaded octane, courtesy of the previous owner in Japan.

We stopped at the freshly paved Port Link Road just above Potenga with

bid adieu to our friend after a quick caffeine refill as we started for Dhaka by sundown as we only had one thing in our mind - khichuri from Highway Inn.

Sometimes, all you need is good music and good company on a trip accompanied by swinging AC vents in a Toyota Crown to really humble yourself and appreciate the finer things in life. We simply wafted in style and comfort as the hybrid system allowed us to do 25 KMPL to Highway Inn.

We reluctantly resumed our road trip back to Dhaka. By 11 AM, we were on Mayor Hanif Flyover, on our way to the concrete jungle, and just like that, we made a round trip to Dhaka-Chittagong with plenty of sightseeing and memories created in under 14 hours.

I had never wanted a time machine more that night, to rewind the clock back to 24 hours and relive the day once more. Thus, I come to the conclusion of my travelogue with one piece of advice: the best way to frantically explore Chittagong is to opt for a road trip, the next time you or a close friend buys a car from Japan!



quite possibly the most glorious view of the many scattered ships drifting at sea, which bore striking resemblance to the marine drive road in Cox's Bazar.

The sky burst into a colour pallet of orange mixed with purple as the sun was engulfed by the horizon, leaving us speechless as I frantically pressed my trusty camera to capture the sunset as everyone savoured the moment. We

PHOTOS: AHBAAR MILKY



Rethinking workplaces

How reliance on tech helped us reshape post-pandemic work culture

REHENUMA RAYSA

During the pandemic, workplaces went through major transformations where many companies, businesses, and individuals ditched the traditional workplaces and took work to home, giving rise to the most significant 'work from home' scenario.

Tech played a pivotal role during the lockdown as many embraced remote technologies to work efficiently and effectively. Fast forward to the present, in a somewhat vaccinated world, when many remote workers take a journey back to their previous workplaces, tech is aiding them now as well.

Hybrid work plan

People have resorted to choosing what suits them well after exploring the alternatives to regular workplaces. The tech giants such as Microsoft, Facebook, Google, Apple, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, Spotify, Quora, Amazon and Dropbox to mention a few are reluctant to ask for the return of all of their employees at the office after the lockdown. These global companies have acknowledged the numerous benefits of working from home during the pandemic, and are allowing the majority of their employees to relocate or work from home. They are to work

remotely for an indefinite period in the wake of the Omicron variant, unless their work requires specialised physical presence.

The Covid-19 panic is still gripping the world. While the world is not yet completely safe from the virus, advantages like less commute time, flexible work hours, and convenient working environments urge employees to opt for the newer option of remote working. Workplace software keeps supporting accelerated productivity and office operations by being incorporated into the post-pandemic working situations. There are, however, some people who can not let go of the perks of in-person working in fear of missing out on socialising with colleagues or having trouble adjusting to the new 'norm'.

In the post-pandemic era, even though many are going back to their original working arrangements, tech is still helping people choose what is feasible for them. This in turn promotes the hybrid work model, where proper implementation of tech ensures that employees can experience the best of both work environments while eliminating the impediments of each option.

Readjusting to traditional workplaces
A safe workspace and strict hygiene

measures are given top priority in post-pandemic workplaces so that employees are comfortable going back to work. To ensure their employees remain safe in their respective workplaces, companies have begun integrating touchless tech. Face recognition or other touch-free biometric verifications are replacing customary ID checking methods. Robots are being used to clean up shared devices or surfaces of the workspaces. AR tech helps maintain a connected network system between employees. Tech is here not just for the practical advantages it provides, but also for strengthening communal unity.

Even now, traditional workplaces need to be safe, healthy and sufficiently distanced. Smart offices, buildings with automated functionalities or contactless facilities, are growing in popularity. Wearable technology is also receiving significant recognition for seamless social distancing, along with digital payment methods. Post-pandemic workplaces are adapting to the digital shift of smart technologies. Although such use of technological advancements is still less common in specifically Bangladesh, many do hope these tech-enabled options will be put to use here as well.

On the other hand, there are individuals who are concerned with our seemingly over-reliance on tech. Many employers, despite being willing, cannot fully accept the newer demands of smart offices or a fully AI-integrated workplace. It is a shift many are finding hard to adjust to or even comprehend as they are afraid tech might take over their place when the employment opportunities are already scarce. Many still remain worried about the ever-present concern of personal data privacy.

Preparation for the future

The pandemic has brought forward a new era of technological revolution. We are becoming more competent with technology thanks to our pandemic experiences. The pandemic brought a shift where we utilised tech like never before and tech was the means of staying safe and connected with loved ones while also keeping ourselves productive during long lockdowns. Tech also helped many maintain their livelihood despite their physical workplaces being closed down for almost over a year. Moving into the post-pandemic era, we have come to truly appreciate the values and capabilities of technology more robustly.

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