

The ABCs of Cycling

Have you ever been stuck in traffic on a tedious bus commute and wanted to just skip through? That's a silly question since traffic in Dhaka is never friendly and always dreaded. If you were on a pair of wheels yourself, riding a bicycle, you could just slip through the traffic like a hummingbird.

Bicycle needs no introduction. It's a popular mean of transportation in the rural areas. Perhaps not so much in the cities. But why not consider the idea for a moment?

Why get a bicycle?

There are a number of reasons. The most obvious one is of course — for transportation. If you want an easy ride that gets you to work and back at home, a bicycle should definitely be considered. It will save you bus fares and not to mention, you could navigate through narrow streets and traffic jams with ease without getting stuck. This saves you the trouble of hanging onto the bus handles and every time the buses shy away from the roads, you will appreciate your bicycle even more.



Bicycles also promote sound health. Regular cycling improves your stamina and builds muscles. The act stimulates the heart and lungs and blood circulation. In other words, cycling means you do not have to worry about your daily exercise. You will also notice increase in appetite get better sleep.

Which one to get?

There are a few things you need to consider before buying a bicycle. First of all, you need to decide what type of cycle you want to buy. And this will depend on your purpose of cycling. Do you want to just cycle for pleasure? Or commute? Or are you planning a long cycle tour? Your need will lead you to your decision. But for Dhaka city and for casual commuting as well as beginners, mountain bike (MTB) is a good choice.

"It's suitable for Dhaka streets and easier to handle", assured Sakiul Islam Antor, admin of Riders71, one of the most active cycling groups in Dhaka.



You will notice that there are different styles of handles, different types of brakes and so on. You should always pick the one you feel comfortable with. "For casual use, try to pick a bicycle without gears. Gears can be hectic to maintain and in the long run, a gearless cycle would be better", said Md Jubair Ahmed, Management Director of Golden Wheel BD.

Remember the accessories

If you get a bicycle, you will need a number of accessories to make your ride safe and smooth. First and most importantly you will need to get a helmet. Safety comes first and you should never ride without a helmet. Gloves, kneepads and a pair of goggles should also be considered for personal safety.

Your bicycle is your companion and it

would be a shame should it got stolen. So, for your bike's safety, you will need to get a lock. There are so many different choices for that — pick whichever one satisfies you. For the streets, you will need to get a horn or bell and if you have any plans or possibilities of cycling after dark, you should get headlight and taillight. Both of which are highly recommended for cycling in the city.

Maintenance

Think of your bicycle as your steel horse and horses need attending to. A bicycle will remain in good condition if it's used and maintained regularly. Leaving it in a corner will reduce its performance.

Maintenance cost is not very high and most of the smaller issues can be handled by yourself with the help of some simple tools.

"If you have a patch kit, tyre lever, allen keys, pliers, chain cutter and pumper, you can handle the simple issues yourself", added Sakiul Islam Antor. However, complicated issues that include the braking mechanisms and such should not be meddled with and done by professionals.

Where to buy?

There are a number of places you could get a bicycle in Dhaka. Gulshan link road, Tejturi Bazar, Mirpur — all of these places offer a number of bicycle stores. But 'Bangshal Cycle Market' is where you should consider visiting. It's the biggest

cycle market in Dhaka and you will have a myriad of options, not just in terms of cycles but in shops as well. And it's always good to have options.

"The bicycle market is very dependent on importing and Bangshal is where most of the importers are" reminded Md Jubair Ahmed of Golden Wheel BD who are importers themselves. You will also find all the accessories and tools you need for maintenance at Bangshal.

Café cyclist, Bikeshop BD, Cycle Surgery are some of the renown shops across Dhaka that will offer the accessories as well.

Life behind bars

It's easy to get hooked with cycling once you start. It does not take long to learn cycling and it's even easier as an adult. Once you start cycling, you might consider a cycle tour with friends and family. Bosila, Keraniganj, Mawa Road, Green model town, Amulia model town, a number of spots in Mirpur — these are the best roads for cycling around Dhaka.

You should consider joining a cycling community since they arrange weekly events regularly and it's a great way to hangout, make friends and rejuvenate yourself. You can easily find your local cycling community through Facebook. BD Cyclist, Riders71, North Dhaka Cyclist, South Dhaka Cyclist, Family Cyclist are some of the active groups and it might be worth mentioning that they are very welcoming.

Remember, cycling might be a way of saving time buy driving recklessly to save time should always be avoided. A bicycle is the lightest vehicle on the streets and in case of a crash, the cyclist is most likely to get hurt. So, stay safe, drive safe and always wear your helmet.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Riders71

