



Your passport to freedom: BUYING THAT FIRST CAR

When do you feel like you have become an adult? This is a question that can warrant all sorts of answers. A practical one? Perhaps when you become a homeowner. A realistic one — when you buy your first car.

Buying a car in Bangladesh is a feat and a half, and for the uninitiated, it can be quite a daunting experience. The cost, especially, is the main detracting factor for most people, as cars here are worth around 300 per cent over their original sticker price. So, whatever decision you take, you must do so after significant consideration. The important question is — do you need to?

DO YOU NEED A CAR?

As strange as it may sound, as Dhaka developed, the need for owning a car dropped considerably. If you grew up in the '80s or '90s, transportation was few and far between, and the road network was not as well-maintained or elaborate. Plus, owning a car back then warranted a certain amount of social prestige.

Nowadays, the situation is almost the exact opposite. Dhakaites have access to much more elaborate transportation alternatives, the road network has drastically improved, halving the distance between the city's extremes, and public transportation has multiple alternatives.

can your regular commutes be done with something like the metro rail? If so, and you could do your other commutes on ride-sharing services, then you might consider skipping buying a car entirely and saving money for the future.

If public transport does not cover your route efficiently, or your commutes do not always follow a similar pattern, the next thing to consider would be what kind of car you need. This depends on your family/regular occupants, and it is an important consideration because your car type will dictate its price, tax, and running costs.

Currently, there are different types of cars you can look into as viable options. You could choose a hatchback style, a saloon style, or a similar sub-category of cars called estates or station wagons. If you have a big family, and only commute in Dhaka, and maybe the occasional trip to your ancestral home, there's the minivan/microbus.

And if you need a really big space, plus a comfy ride, and travel around Bangladesh and its sketchy roads, you could go for SUVs, or if that is too much for you, the in-between car style which is a crossover.

If it's just you and maybe your newly married partner, you could get away with a hatchback. If you are a family of four, a 4-door hatchback or saloon car should cover you.

cost incurred.

So, why choose new? For starters, it's new — meaning there are no hidden mechanical faults waiting to rear its ugly head the moment you drive out of the dealership. These cars are also the latest models on the market, and they have the most up-to-date safety features and all the bells and whistles when it comes to equipment trims.

The warranty is also another key feature. Generally, new cars are sold with bumper-to-bumper warranties lasting 3 to 10 years, including coverage for up to about 100,000 kilometres of service and three annual services. Buying new cars means a wise investment, particularly from honest dealers. However, they are so much more expensive

These battery-related servicing will add another Tk 2,500 to 5,000 to your usual servicing bills. The rest of the car follows the same servicing routine as a regular petrol-driven car.

Of course, changing customer preferences is also an observable aspect of the new automobile market. Saloon cars used to be incredibly popular a decade or so ago. Now, though, urban crossovers such as the Honda CR-V, Toyota's Corolla Cross, Yaris Cross, Harrier, and Mitsubishi Outlander are ruling the roost. Hatchbacks have fallen behind in popularity.

Chinese brands have come a long way since their initial introduction and perception. Models like the Cherry's Tiggo 7, Tiggo 8 Pro, MG HV, and Haval



It's always best to take a trusted mechanic with you to help you sort through the mechanical aspects of the car in question. You should start with the obvious things, like what fuel was used to run the engine, as CNG-converted cars usually have knackered engines, after a few years.

There is also the case of CNG conversions done incorrectly/cheaply, leading to problems down the line. Go over the body of the car, and any modifications done to it. Ask for denting/painting work done, why it was done, and if there was any accident history on the car, although most sellers may not be forthcoming with that information for obvious reasons.

So, if you really want to do a thorough check, you could run the car's plate with the police. There has been a recent trend started by some uninformed aftermarket shops that improperly install sunroofs on cars that never had them.

While installing sunroofs on cars is not a big deal by itself if done correctly, these shops take problems to a whole new ballpark by cutting the roof completely off from the A, B, and C pillars, and then welding a new roof with a sunroof on!

If you do not know why that's a problem, the answer is simple: this car is now a complete write-off, as this car's structural rigidity has now been completely compromised, and in the event of an accident, it will mean almost certain death to occupants, as the car will no longer have the same crash protection.

Next, check the engine bay and the engine itself. Ask the owner to start the engine and see how it runs. If it's smooth throughout the revs, it's usually all ok. Check the fluids and reservoirs and ask how often they were changed. Also, check behind the engine, to see the condition of the firewall. Most people, when cleaning the engine bay, often neglect the

firewall, and leaked oil and rust tend to gather there as a result.

Other things worth checking are the brakes and suspension. If there are any problems, they will show up on the tyres, so make sure to see how the wear on the tyres is. Check the interior, and if it has been recently re-upholstered, make sure the materials and fabrics were properly installed and there are no gaps or rattling on the trim.

Check the chassis for rust because that's an expensive problem to fix in the future. If you are buying a hybrid, make sure the batteries and electronics are working fine, and ask for service invoices for batteries, as hybrids require specific battery maintenance.

You should also check the transmission, as improper use and maintenance of automatic gearboxes can lead to damage. A quick check is to see if the transmission shakes or jerks when in gear. It's a sign of improper use.

THE LEGAL STUFF

Once you have narrowed down your preferred car/model and where you want to get them from, there remains the matter of legal checklists.

Your car's engine displacement is measured by CC and the higher it is, the more tax is incurred. Engines above 1,500CC, which is the most common size of engines in Bangladesh, are taxed quite severely.

In Bangladesh, proper transfer of ownership is a must to ensure the vehicle is legally registered under your name. The authority responsible for registering vehicles is the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), and all necessary documentation must be carried out through their official channel.

The documents required are an original registration certificate, tax token, fitness certificate, insurance papers, and road permit (when applicable). If the car is reconditioned, documenting the import clearance is critical for establishing the legality of bringing the vehicle into the country.

The stakeholders should verify the identity of the car (chassis number and engine number) from the official records so that he does not become a victim of a stolen or illegally modified vehicle.

Buying your first car is an exciting, but daunting process that requires preparation and decisions based on genuine knowledge but done right, you could very well be on your way towards a kind of freedom you only dreamed of as a child.

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Add to that the Metro Rail, which can get you from Shahbagh to Uttara, in minutes, faster than you could ever hope to reach in a car, and the 'feel' of car ownership by using ride-sharing apps that can have any model of car appear before you, ready to take you anywhere you wish, all without the hassle of actually owning a car.

YOU STILL NEED IT

If you are here, that means you have concluded that a car is required to fulfil your needs. In this case, let's get to the necessary information.

The first thing to go over is

And if your family exceeds five people or more, or you regularly travel with companions, or you often travel outside the city and encounter ill-maintained roads, you could choose between minivans, crossovers, or full-blown SUVs.

NEW AND SPARKLY: THE EASY WAY OUT

If you want the least amount of hassle and the most amount of peace of mind when buying your first car, there really is no alternative to the brand-new route. Yes, it is the more expensive route, but the benefits, for many, far outweigh the initial

due to the import taxes.

If you want financing options, you do have a few. Banks usually lend at around 12 per cent interest rates, with a maximum loan limit of Tk 60 lakhs. You can get up to 70 per cent loan for hybrid sedans and 60 per cent for non-hybrid sedans. Leasing, in turn, may fulfil the entire cost of the car at the slightly higher interest rate of 15 per cent.

Hybrid vehicles have gained immense popularity, which was not the case even 5-6 years ago, due mainly to their relatively low price compared to petrol vehicles while boosting fuel economy. However, proper maintenance is necessary, but that, too, is nowhere near as complicated as people make it out to be.

These cars require some routine maintenance. This includes topping up the engine oil on service intervals, and the general consensus from dealers is to use 0w16 fully synthetic engine oil, regardless of what brand of car you drive. Then there is the battery which needs servicing every 6 months, specifically for Toyota and Honda hybrids. Then there is also the matter of a cooling fan dedicated to the batteries, which also needs cleaning every 3 to 6 months, depending on the dirt/debris that accumulates there.

Jolion are extremely popular with customers here.

While it should not be the primary concern, resale value should also be considered when making a purchase, the idea being that at the end of your ownership, you should be able to get most of your money back. This is where Japanese brands like Toyota and Honda have an overwhelming advantage, as these cars are traditionally reliable, easy to repair, and have widespread spare parts availability.

CHEAP AND CHALLENGING: RECONDITIONED/USED

If you are a car guy looking to get a good deal, or you have access to one or simply want to take on a challenge, reconditioned or used cars can end up being your final decision.

While everyone knows what used cars are, reconditioned cars need a refresher for those a little foggy on details. Cars that have undergone refurbishment to meet specific standards are called reconditioned vehicles. These vehicles, sourced predominantly from Japan, are generally more affordable than new vehicles and offer a wider variety of models within any given budget.

Once you have narrowed down your price and vehicle segment, it's time to choose.