100kmph

Posted on



On the E01

We arrive at the E01 from Kottawa. The distance to Galle is 104.5km. Through the toll gates and off we go at 100kmph. The time is 7:48 am…

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The E01, Sri Lanka’s first expressway is here and for many Sri Lankans this is a novel experience in itself. Here is ample compensation for all the mind numbing traffic congestion often experienced. With four crisp new lanes that stretch to eternity and no obstruction in sight, it is a smooth sailing cruise. What’s more 60 kmph is as slow as you can get. It certainly is a happy hour for those behind the steering wheel!

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Before the expressway was officially opened to the public in November, 2011, travelling from Colombo to Galle was a journey like any other with a duration of up to three hours.The expressway however, not only allows commuters to reach the Island’s southern regions such as Matara, in approximately one hour, but further paves the way to reach other destinations along its length with five exit points that include Kalutara, just short of midway, and Hikkaduwa towards the end. At the point of entry the guard at the toll gates issues a time stamped ticket and in these initial days since the opening one can sense a mixture of pride and excitement exchanged. It’s smiles all around and I have a vague sensation of being in ‘Pleasantville’.

As soon as we hit the tarmac the engine is enthusiastically revved up to 100 kmph and on this road however, it feels like peanuts. Cruising along with shutters down, the wind deliciously whipping your hair and the changing landscapes on either sides that turn like pages in a picture book, it can be said that whatever may be the conveniences of the E01, the ride itself is a treat. Along the way, signposts indicating the distances covered, distance to the next approaching exit, and named interchanges leave no room for travellers to lose their way or miss their exit. Toll stations are installed at all eight exit points where payments are collected, and patrol cars of the expressway’s safety task-force are also a visible presence along the way. Row fences are maintained on either side of the road throughout the journey in an attempt to stave off dogs and other animals from the road. Green paddy fields or meandering rivers are glimpses that meet the eye and beside the highway commuters can come across an ornate sculpture of a soaring bird. However, lingering on the highway to absorb its many sights is simply not an option and is prohibited.

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After an uninhibited dose of vroom, although comically weatherbeaten from the whipping winds, we reach Pinnaduwa our final exit in Galle. And the time is 8:41 am. That was fast!

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