



BY RACHNA TYAGI

**A**lthough late to arrive in India, Toyota Yaris, the latest offering from the Japanese carmaker, offers a neat little package for all those wanting to upgrade to a budget sedan. All set to take on rivals like Maruti Suzuki Ciaz, Honda City and Hyundai Verna, Toyota Yaris should find takers on account of two major factors—safety features and technology.

The Yaris's 1496cc engines are available in both manual and automatic transmissions. The manual has a six-speed transmission, whereas the automatic is a seven-speed CVT-i offering. Toyota claims a fuel efficiency of 17.1kmpl on the MT, and

17.8kmpl on the AT. We prefer the MT to the AT, because the engine whine in the latter penetrates into the cabin once you hit 80kmph. Despite slight sluggishness, the Yaris is an able performer.

The two-tone interiors look fresh and appealing; the fit and finish are top quality, whether it is the leather seats or the hard plastics. Innovative thinking from Toyota has resulted in roof-mounted air vents that cool the cabin rapidly. This is a big plus, because several carmakers offer it at knee position, which is not of much use. Cruise control, paddle shifts and power driver seats ensure comfortable rides. There is also the gesture-controlled audio—which when used will seem, to outsiders, like you are

honing your *mudra* skills.

What really impressed us were the safety features. From seven airbags—even one to protect your knees—to hill start assist control that prevents the car from rolling backwards, to the Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, the Yaris is big on safety. The best feature, however, is its braking prowess—it gets disc brakes on all four wheels. We tried some hard braking manoeuvres at some really high speeds, enroute to Nandi Hills, Bengaluru, and were blown away by the car's impeccable response.

Available in six colors, the Toyota Yaris is definitely the new kid on the block whose arrival was much awaited in India. If Toyota gets its pricing right, it should sell like hot cakes. ♦