



The winning four - the new-generation Audi A4

Benchmarking synthesis of technology and esthetics • Best drag coefficient in its class

KUWAIT: The new-generation Audi A4 is a fascinating synthesis of technology and esthetics. All the technology in the brand's bestselling family has been redeveloped so that it yet again defines the benchmark in the segment. During the development work, high priority was placed on the reduction of CO2 emissions. All technologies were focused on reducing drive resistance. The new Audi A4 has just arrived in Kuwait at Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company showroom, the exclusive dealer of Audi in Kuwait.

A good example is aerodynamics: The A4 Sedan has the best drag coefficient in its class at 0.23. The new models also have impressively low CO2 emissions. The most powerful engine for the Middle East will be a four-cylinder unit with 252 hp, S-tronic and quattro wheel drive. Driver assistance systems and infotainment are of luxury quality. A new generation of four-cylinder TFSI engines with newly developed combustion methods sets benchmarks in terms of fuel consumption, emissions and performance for four-cylinder gasoline engines. Expected arrival date for the the A4 Sedan in the region is first quarter of 2016. Three different TFSI models will be on offer: 35 TFSI with 150 hp (1.4 engine), 40 TFSI with 190 hp (2.0 engine) and the top of the range engine 45 TFSI with 252 hp (2.0 engine).

At 4.73 meters long and with a wheelbase of 2.82 meters - the new Audi A4 has a confident stance on the road. A prominent horizontal line on the front and rear emphasizes the car's width. The flowing design with concise lines communicates the sporty elegance of the brand. The Singleframe grille is wide and low; the optionally available headlights in LED and Matrix LED technology (including dynamic turn indicators) make technology a visual trademark.

Up to 120 kilograms lighter

Compared with the previous model, the car's dimensions have grown but its weight has been reduced significantly - by up to 120 kilograms, depending on the engine. The body of the new Audi models is one of the lightest in its class thanks to an intelligent material mix and lightweight construction.

The Audi A4 is a leader in its class also in terms of noise levels. All occupants

enjoy generous space; the smooth lines emphasize the width of the interior. The front of the dashboard features a broad band of air outlets and a large decorative surface. At night, optional discreet contour lighting illuminates the doors and the central console. The quality of workmanship is uncompromisingly high. Colors and materials follow a new line concept allowing customers even more freedom during configuration.

Information and fascination: the Audi virtual cockpit and MMI

The new model offers an abundance of intelligent technologies, the use of which is even more intuitive with the new Audi MMI display and control concept. Technological highlights of the new A4 include the Audi virtual cockpit, the Audi Matrix LED headlights, the Audi smartphone interface, the Bang & Olufsen Sound System with 3D sound, the Audi phone box with wireless charging, the head-up display and new driver assistance systems like the parking assist, rear cross-traffic assist, exit warning, collision avoidance assist, turn assist and the Audi pre-sense systems.

The focus here is on two innovations. The optional Audi virtual cockpit, a fully digital combination instrument, features a 12.3-inch LCD screen that displays the most important information in brilliant high-resolution graphics, with great detail and sophisticated effects.

The MMI control concept in the center console is also a newly designed feature and acts as the main control element. The top-end infotainment system, MMI Navigation plus with MMI touch and a large 8.3-inch monitor, has a touchpad in the rotary controller to zoom in and out and to enter characters. The entire MMI control logic is similar to that of a smartphone and includes an intelligent free-text search function. The new, more natural, voice-control system also understands input in normal everyday language, such as "I want to call Peter Miller."

Concentrated computing power

MMI Navigation plus is backed by the computing power of the second-generation modular infotainment platform, which allows Audi to bring consumer electronics innovations into the vehicle quick-

ly. The Audi smartphone interface is a new feature. It integrates iOS and Android mobile phones into an environment developed especially for this purpose - Audi MMI. The Audi phone box connects smartphones to the on-board antenna and charges them inductively according to the Qi standard. For discerning hi-fi fans, the Bang & Olufsen Sound System with innovative 3D sound is available, which introduces the additional dimension of height. The new Audi tablet can also be used as flexible rear seat entertainment.



Powerful four-cylinder engines

The new Audi A4 will be launched in the Middle East with three TFSI engines. Their power output has increased significantly and ranges from 150 hp to 252 hp, but fuel consumption has been reduced by up to 21 percent. All the engines combine high efficiency with sporty power delivery and smoothness.

The new Audi A4 has a groundbreaking innovation for the gasoline engines: The 2.0 TFSI ultra with 190 hp uses an absolutely new combustion method that makes it especially efficient and allows fuel consumption of 4.8 liters per 100 km and CO2 emissions of 109 g/km.

S-tronic transmission

The powertrain and the chassis of the new Audi A4 has been completely redeveloped. The seven-gear S-tronic (now also available for front-wheel drive) has been redesigned; the automatic transmission now offers a fuel-saving freewheel-

ing function. Wheel-selective torque control supplements the work of the front-wheel drive and the quattro drive.

Driving dynamics

The handling of new A4 makes a great leap forward: on the one hand sporty and performance oriented, but with a focus on comfort at the same time. The suspension and steering filter out disturbances such as an uneven road surface, but communicate to the driver important information such as increases

to stay in lane and the Stop&Go adaptive cruise control including traffic-jam assist eases driving in slow-moving traffic. One special feature of traffic-jam assist is its control strategy. It takes into account a large number of parameters such as road markings and the traffic ahead. Some more innovations that make important contributions to safety are parking assist, rear cross-traffic assist, exit warning, collision avoidance assist, turn assist and the Audi pre-sense systems.

The new Audi A4 will be available from dealerships in the region as of first quarter 2016. Its standard equipment is even more comprehensive than that of its predecessor. It includes xenon headlights, keyless go, a Bluetooth interface, Audi drive select and a 7-inch MMI color display.

At a glance

The new Audi A4

Exterior design and body

- * Athletic proportions and sporty elegance.

- * 4.73 meters long, 2.82-meter wheelbase, 1.84 meters wide, 1.43 meters high.

- * Optional LED headlights and matrix LED headlights with dynamic turn indicators.

- * Light body: weight reduced by up to 15 kilograms compared with the previous model.

- * Best drag coefficient in its class: 0.23 for the Sedan; aeroacoustics ensure peace and quiet on board.

Interior

- * The longest interior and greatest shoulder width at the front compared with competitors.

- * Interior design with large decorative surfaces and continuous air vent strip; new colors and materials, spacious interior, LED interior lighting as standard equipment, first-class workmanship.

- * Largest range of lightweight seats amongst the premium competitors.

- * Automatic climate control with a new interface.

- * Optional LED interior lighting packages with color-adjustable ambient lighting.

- * New equipment concept with sport and design selection - for the first time with exterior differentiation Controls.

- * Optionally available: head-up display

and Audi virtual cockpit.

- * Completely redesigned MMI operating concept including free-text search function.

- * Can also be operated by multifunction steering wheel and natural-language voice control Infotainment.

- * Optional top-end infotainment system MMI Navigation plus with MMI touch and an 8.3-inch MMI monitor including Audi phone box with inductive charging.

- * Audi smartphone interface for connecting Apple and Android phones.

- * Bang & Olufsen Sound System with innovative 3D sound and Audi tablet as mobile rear-seat entertainment.

Engines

- * Three TFSI engines at market launch, 150 hp to 252 hp, up to 25 percent more power.

- * Fuel consumption reduced by up to 21 percent.

- * Economical 1.4 TFSI with 4.9 liters per 100 km and 114 grams CO2 per km.

Drivetrain

- * New generations of the S-tronic transmission. S-tronic in A4 for front-wheel drive for the first time, automatic transmission with freewheeling function.

- * Front-wheel drive or quattro drive with wheel-selective torque control.

Suspension

- * Redesigned, light five-link axles at front and rear, significant increase in comfort with accentuated sportiness

- * Newly developed electromechanical power steering, with dynamic steering on request

- * Audi drive select dynamic driving system standard as of 190 hp, suspension with adjustable shock absorbers available as an option

- * Driver assistance systems and integrated safety

- * Stop&Go adaptive cruise control including traffic-jam assist for slow-moving traffic

- * Audi active lane assist and Audi side assist

- * New: parking assist, rear cross-traffic assist, exit warning, turn assist, collision avoidance assist

- * New safety systems: Audi pre sense city, basic and rear.

ANBANG: FROM AUTO INSURANCE TO GLOBAL BUYER OF LUXURY HOTELS

CHINA GIANT'S ASSETS DOUBLED TO \$253BN SINCE 2014

BEIJING: China's Anbang Insurance Group Co has emerged from near obscurity 18 months ago to sign deals worth more than \$30 billion, moving into the big league of global real estate and finance.

The Beijing-based firm has offered \$12.8 billion for US hotel operator Starwood and also agreed this month to pay Blackstone Group \$6.5 billion for Strategic Hotels & Resorts Inc, whose 16 luxury properties include the Four Seasons Washington DC. Established in 2004 as an automotive and property insurer by chairman Wu Xiaohui, a native of China's entrepreneurial coastal city Wenzhou, Anbang is looking to use its 1.65 trillion yuan (\$253 billion) in assets to transform into a worldwide investor.

"Anbang will have a global footprint. In 10 years, Anbang will have companies on all the world's continents," Wu, who is 49 and married to Deng Zhuorui, a granddaughter of Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping, told students at Harvard University last year.

Business associates describe Wu as passionate, impatient and very ambitious. He often travels by private jet accompanied by a retinue of assistants. His acquisition strategy is underpinned by an aggressive pursuit of yield-producing companies, those business associates say, funded by cash from selling insurance products and other sources.

In October 2014, Anbang agreed to pay \$1.95 billion for the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, a move Wu said brought the insurer "extra brand recognition" and business opportunities.

Last year, Anbang agreed to buy US insurer Fidelity & Guaranty Life for \$1.6 billion, and paid around \$1 billion for South Korea's Tong Yang Life Insurance Co. It has also bought control of Fidea, a Belgium based insurer, and the Belgian banking operations of Dutch insurer Delta Lloyd. It is in talks to buy Allianz's South Korean operations.

At home, Anbang has a leading stake in China Minsheng Banking Corp Ltd, the country's



NEW YORK: A person walks in to a Sheraton Hotel in downtown Brooklyn on Monday in New York City. A fight for the Starwood Hotel chain, which Sheraton is a member of, is underway following a \$14 billion buyout offer Monday from a consortium led by China's Anbang Insurance Group. — AFP

biggest private lender, and is a significant shareholder in China Vanke Co, the largest residential property developer.

CONNECTIONS

When he set up Anbang, Wu enlisted a small consortium of private and state investors led by Shanghai Automotive Industry Group Corp, the parent of a government-owned automaker that has ventures with General Motors and Volkswagen. State-owned China Petrochemical Corp later bought a stake. Anbang's original board included Levin Zhu, former CEO of China International Capital Corp and son of former

premier Zhu Rongji, and Long Yongtu, China's chief negotiator when it joined the World Trade Organization. Wu also turned to Chen Xiaolu, a son of Chinese Marshal Chen Yi, for support.

Anbang holds licenses for selling property, life and health insurance, and operates an annuity insurance business and asset management arm. It doesn't publish group finances, but says its assets have more than doubled since December 2014. Two subsidiaries, Anbang Life Insurance and Anbang Annuity Insurance, raised 49 billion yuan (\$7.53 billion) in investment funds last year, mainly through selling high-yielding universal life insurance policies. — Reuters

BOJ KEEPS MONETARY POLICY UNCHANGED DESPITE RISKS

TOKYO: Japan central bank choose yesterday to keep its monetary policy mostly unchanged but noted a raft of risks for an economy making scant headway toward a sustained recovery.

Analysts had been divided over whether the Bank of Japan would expand its lavish asset purchases or cut interest rates still further to spur growth. The decision to wait-and-see took share prices lower in most regional markets. Japan's economy contracted in the last quarter of 2015, buffeted by the slowdown in China and other emerging economies. Recent data suggest it might shrink again during this quarter, in what would be Japan's third "technical recession," or two straight quarters of contraction, in four years.

"While the BOJ refrained from adding more stimulus today, sluggish economic activity and the stronger yen suggest that policymakers will have to announce more easing soon," Marcel Thieliand of Capital Economics said in a research note.

The continued weakness prompted the BOJ to impose a "negative interest rate" policy that took effect last month and requires banks to pay a fee of 0.1 percent on excess reserves kept at the central bank.

That measure followed similar moves in Europe but is unpopular with financial circles and the public, who are seeing rates paid on their own savings deposits shrink ever closer to zero.

The BOJ's meeting comes just ahead of a meeting this week by the US Federal Reserve that will be closely watched for hints of possible future rate hikes. Japan's interest rates have remained near zero for years. Under BOJ Gov. Haruhiko Kuroda, the central bank has been buying roughly 80 trillion yen (\$700 billion) of government



TOKYO: Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda answers questions during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

bonds and other assets a year.

The injections of cash into the economy are meant to drive prices higher, prompting businesses and consumers to spend more, but demand has remained tepid, falling 1.2 percent from a year earlier in the October to December quarter. Given that trend, the BOJ's description of private demand as "resilient" marked a "fresh high of absurdity," Thieliand said.

Japan's current spring "labor offensive" is expected to yield only modest wage increases, despite appeals to the business community to do more to help support the economy. The BOJ's statement yesterday noted a slowdown in housing and public investments and recent volatility in global financial markets. It forecast that exports and industrial output would remain sluggish and said inflation was likely to stay at about 0 percent for now but eventually climb toward a 2 percent target set three nearly years ago. — AP