Some handy definitions

- **Frontal airbags** deploy from the steering wheel and the glove box to protect the driver and the front passenger in a frontal crash. To benefit most from these airbags, remember to wear properly adjusted seatbelts, no matter how casual or short the ride is.
- **Curtain side-airbags** protect both the head and upper torso by forming a cushion between the occupant and the side door/window. They deploy from above the window sill in a side impact crash. Curtain side-airbags are provided for each row of seats and unlike the frontal airbags, deflate over time, thus providing valuable protection in rollover type crashes.
- **Seatbelt pretensioners** tighten and reduce slack in seatbelts to protect occupants from rapidly moving forward in a crash.
- **Antilock Braking System (ABS)** reduces the risk of wheel lock-up when braking heavily or on slippery surfaces. This helps to maintain better steering control and avoid hitting objects and other vehicles.
- **Electronic Stability Control (ESC)** reduces the danger of skidding or losing control, as a result of drivers' reactions to obstacles. It uses computer-controlled technology to apply individual brakes and helps bring the car safely back in line, without the danger of fish-tailing.
- **Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB)** employs sensors to monitor presence and relative speeds of other vehicles and road users in the proximity. It warns the driver of any imminent danger of collision and even applies brakes, if the driver fails to take corrective action.
- **Emergency Brake Assist (EBA)** is a driver assist technology that applies full braking effort when it senses that the driver is attempting an emergency stop. This works in conjunction with Antilock Braking System (ABS) to avoid wheel lock-up.
- **Traction control systems** measure wheel rotation to help give your car optimum grip and stability on the road when you accelerate. It stops wheel spin by reducing engine power or temporarily applying the brakes to that wheel. This allows the car to accelerate smoothly, even on slippery surfaces. Limited slip differentials also help distribute traction forces evenly on a slippery surface.
- **Headrests** are important safety features and should be fitted to all seats – front and back – because they help prevent whiplash in rear impact crashes.
- **Active Cruise Control or Adaptive Cruise Control** detects the distance and speed of the vehicle in front of you and maintains a safe following distance.
- **Blind spot warning systems** detect the distance and closing speed of objects in adjacent lanes, and alerts you if a collision is imminent.
- **Lane Departure Warning (LDW)** systems warn drivers when they drift from their lane or lane change occurs without indication.

Your vehicle safety checklist

How does it rate?

Does the car rate four stars or more on ANCAP (for new cars) or UCSR (for used cars)?

Does it do the job?

- [ ] Off road use
- [ ] Long distance travel
- [ ] General motoring
- [ ] Everyday commuting
- [ ] Child restraints
- [ ] Towing a caravan/trailer
- [ ] Enough storage space to secure items in the car & boot

Check off the safety features

Crash protection

- [ ] 4 or 5 star safety rating
- [ ] Seatbelt pretensioners
- [ ] Load limiter seatbelts
- [ ] Dual front airbags
- [ ] Curtain airbags and side impact protection
- [ ] Side airbags
- [ ] Knee airbags
- [ ] Anti-whiplash system
- [ ] Adjustable head restraints
- [ ] Cargo barrier
- [ ] Crumple zones

Crash avoidance

- [ ] Anti-lock braking system (ABS)
- [ ] Electronic stability control (ESC)
- [ ] Emergency brake assist (EBA)
- [ ] Traction control
- [ ] Cruise control
- [ ] Active cruise control
- [ ] Reverse camera and/or sensors
- [ ] Automated daytime running lights
- [ ] White or another highly visible colour
- [ ] Intelligent speed adaptation (ISA) system

Driver comfort

- [ ] Adjustable seating position
- [ ] Adjustable steering wheel
- [ ] Adjustable seatbelt height
- [ ] Electric adjustable mirrors
- [ ] Sufficient head and leg room
- [ ] Good all round visibility with no obstructions/blind spots from the driver seat
- [ ] Easy to use instruments/controls eg. cruise control, wipers
- [ ] Comfortable seating and lumbar (lower back) support
- [ ] Power steering

Driveability

Did the following features pass the inspection/test drive?

- [ ] Steering
- [ ] Braking
- [ ] Road handling (e.g. cornering, riding over bumps)
- [ ] Overtaking
- [ ] Reversing
- [ ] Ease of parking
- [ ] Blind spot issues
- [ ] Cooling and heating
- [ ] Turning circle
- [ ] Tyre conditions

Child safety

By law, children up to 7 years must be seated in properly fitted and adjusted child restraints. So make sure you look for the following safety features in your next car:

- [ ] Lap/sash seatbelts (3 point seatbelts) in the centre rear seat position
- [ ] Centre rear anchorage point (hook) for a child seat
- [ ] Are the seatbelts long enough to thread through the restraint when it's in its most extended (reclined) position?
- [ ] If it's a hatch back, is there a clear path between the back seat and the rear anchorage point so that the parcel shelf doesn't interfere with adjustment of the tether strap?
- [ ] If it's a people-mover, does it have anchorage points for all seats? Where are they located? And does fitting a child restraint reduce the number of people you can carry?