

# These rules are made for breaking

CHINTITO



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**O**UR (yours, mine, his and hers) general attitude towards any law is that firstly, it is meant for someone else (perhaps), and secondly, it does not really harm anyone if

imitate the good things of the *foreners* (and the bad), as if the legacy of excess baggage that the British left behind (as laws) was not enough. And although we were never short of people who break and boast, the laws they kept coming.

In justifying the above diatribe, let us delve into a few of the recent legislations in an area where we have been traditionally spending most of our time. No points for guessing the road, although our hopes of relief are rising with the pillars of the numerous under-construction flyovers, now near completion.

Occasionally, an observant you may come across a patchy signpost (derived from some law of some department), hanging discretely on a lamppost and warning vehicle drivers (who have 6/6 eyesight and can read while moving fast), not to cross the sound level above, say seventy or eighty decibels. What is a decibel? Such not-so idyllic terms are for the professor in a Physics lab and some selected poets to fiddle with. It rhymes with dumbbell, but it does not ring a bell on drivers who have to honk and honk to see if their tyres are doing okay, or to greet fellow drivers every three metres.

A court order, if my memory is not failing, declared clearly not too distant a time ago that motorcycles should not ply on pavements. In my opinion, based on my experience as one who never learnt to ride a motor bike, the worst violators on the road, the motor cyclists will ride anywhere and on anything. Most often they will also honk to move the pedestrians off from the latter's only oasis.

Soon after came another court directive, instructing drivers not to drive on the wrong side of the road. Strange order, but given our heritage of boating on our generous waterways, this was a habit that had to be curbed.



I bet you my pride, you stand on any VIP Road, whatever that has come to mean, you will find vehicles violating this order. The bigger the vehicle, the more authority with which it plies the American way, and several little vehicles follow, as they are expected to by 'big brother.'

Only a few months ago, the police or some authority declared a Tk. 200 fine for jaywalking on the road from Farmgate to Shahbagh. The matter was so exciting that a few brave souls tried to figure out whether it was possible to cross without being caught, and their pockets became that much lighter. What happened to the

ones who do not carry that kind of cash is not known? Press photographers and TV cameramen also had a heyday, but for two days, after which the matter was lost in the heap of tribulations that demonstrate our daily life.

As for the motorcyclists, the mandatory helmet rule was lost with the first passenger sitting on the back, or the first helmet. But, most recently, they were told that double- or triple-riding would not be allowed, apparently to check terrorist activities. This sent shivers through the spine of the flingers of petrol bombs, but was also unkind on families for whom this was the only affordable means of transportation. The

rule was defeated by a show of passengers with even policemen caught on camera riding triple.

We are not groomed to abide by laws, except with a stick on wherever you please. For countries that look *chhim-chhaam*, listening to the law is a way of life. As the French lawyer, Charles de Montesquieu said almost three hundred years ago: "There is no nation so powerful, as the one that obeys its laws not from principles of fear or reason, but from passion." Sadly, we are that many years behind.

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As is the case with us, we like to imitate the good things of the 'foreners' (and the bad), as if the legacy of excess baggage that the British left behind (as laws) was not enough. And although we were never short of people who break and boast, the laws they kept coming.

I or my next of kin or my driver breaks a bit of the diktat here and over there. By that philosophy if you will, we have successfully turned this country into a lawbreakers' paradise, and you are wondering why our population is still rising.

Plato had passed his verdict on this nation two and a half centuries ago (that's what makes him one of the greatest thinkers) when he said: "Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly"; we have not. And then he dealt a double blow without even ever meeting a single Bangalee by predicting that "bad people will find a way around the laws." We have.

Governance, ever since the Greek maestros invented it, had to thrive on having a bunch of criminals; or else what would it govern? According to Ayan Rand, author of *The Fountainhead*, a government may go as far as making criminals if there aren't enough of them. This definitely was not our problem. So the powers in the West that want to remain in power declare so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws. She was a woman.

As is the case with us, we like to

## 'We should save ten people before we save one person'

Dr. Bjorn Lomborg is the President of the Copenhagen Consensus Centre, a top ranked think tank, and one of TIME magazine's 100 most influential people. In an exclusive interview with Amitava Kar of The Daily Star, Dr. Lomborg talks about some development ideas for the world and Bangladesh.

The Daily Star (TDS): How did you come up with the ideas and what was the background? Bjorn Lomborg (BL): The UN, with its 2015-2030 process, is going to set the global goals for the next 15 years in September, following the success of the Millennium Development Goals. Since these could end up determining a large part of the period's \$2.5 trillion development aid, it is important we pick targets more effectively. The Copenhagen Consensus has engaged in a project to determine which targets will deliver the most good per dollar spent. We have commissioned in-depth research and cost-benefit analyses on 22 diverse topics of development, ranging from education to gender and energy. Sixty teams of internationally renowned economists, including several Nobel Laureates, are taking into account not just the economic, but also health, social and environmental benefits to the world.

TDS: What are the recommendations? BL: The Millennium Development Goals of the UN that lasted from 2000-2015 were very successful but short. This time they asked everyone and got about 1,400 proposals. They have now whittled them down to 169 targets. Still the list is too long and it has some really good targets, a lot of mediocre ones and a few really poor ones. That's a bad way to help the world. We are reducing them to a couple of dozen by the end of this month.

TDS: Please give us examples of a few poor targets.

BL: Some of them have no substance -- they are well-wishing all the way through. I have pointed them out in my book *The Nobel Laureates' Guide to The Smartest Targets for The World: 2016-2030*. For instance, promising work for everyone sounds nice. But we don't know how to do that; if we knew we would probably be doing that already. Instead, we have to make sure that people will get good education, good nutrition and good health care so that we create opportunities that will lead



to good employment. Don't fix problems you don't know how to fix unless you know how to fix them well. We are trying to find what works well instead of what sounds good.

TDS: How to fix education?

BL: One good solution is pre-school. Focus on young children because it's easier, cheaper and it gives them a life-long longing to learn. It also opens up the opportunity for women to enter the job market. The point is you want to do it at the lowest level where you have the highest impact for the longest amount of time at the lowest cost. Studies show that if you provide children with better nutrition, they become better educated, have more successful lives. So when you focus on nutrition you are also focusing on education.

The UN wants free university education for all. Our economists say that's silly. It's basically a subsidy to the rich people's kids. Everyone does not go to a university. If you want more people in universities, giving them scholarship is perhaps a more effective way.

TDS: How hard is it to solve the problems that matter to all of us? What's missing? Is it the will?

BL: The obstacle is some things cost more than others. Let me give you a simple example although it may not be relevant for Bangladesh. It costs about one tenth to save a person's life from malaria as it does to save a person's life from HIV. Since we are not being able to save everyone, I think we should save ten people before we save one person.

But a lot of people are uncomfortable with that. They argue that we have to save everyone. Of course in a perfect world we should do that. But we are not in that world and we don't.

TDS: Please tell us about the Bangladesh Consensus Project.

BL: I am meeting up with lots of people here in Bangladesh and we are hearing a lot of different solutions. There are some issues that everyone agrees on -- education, nutrition and so on. We want to engage the smartest economists in Bangladesh, in the region and the world and come up with solid research that will tell us what the best solutions for development in Bangladesh are. We would also love to hear from the readers of The Daily Star.

Bangladesh has a budget of about \$29 billion. I would expect this project to come out and tell us how they can spend that money more efficiently on smarter targets. The development community is spending about \$3 billion each year in Bangladesh. We would like to talk to them and say you can undertake projects that can do better. And of course, we would like the public conversation to be about the fact that we want politicians, businesses and everyone else more committed on these things.

TDS: How important is free trade?

BL: Free trade can dramatically improve opportunities. If we have a successful Doha round, we would on an average make every person in the developing world \$1,000 richer per year. There are, however, some real costs. You have to pay off mostly western farmers for accepting not to be protected anymore. We estimate that cost at the order of \$300 billion. But the world would be \$11,000 billion richer per year by 2030. So it's a phenomenally good target. There are legitimate concerns but we have to remember that overall, this is the kind of stuff dreams are made of. If you look at China, they opened up to the world and lifted 680 million people out of poverty in 30 years.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

When a man forgets his ideals he may hope for happiness, but not till then.

John Oliver Hobbes

**CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph**

**ACROSS**

- 1 "Las Vegas"
- 5 Dishonor
- 10 Like a desert
- 11 City of Australia
- 13 Tennis star Sampras
- 14 Build up
- 15 Just for fun
- 17 Lupino of films
- 18 Feels empathy
- 19 "My country - of thee"
- 20 "- your loss!"
- 21 Blanchett of "The Lord of the Rings"
- 22 Disreputable
- 25 Store events
- 26 Story
- 27 Fallow
- 28 Building wing
- 29 Lake vessel
- 33 Tavern drink
- 34 Gist
- 35 Richards of "Twisted"
- 37 Solemn ceremony
- 38 City of Australia
- 39 Hotel offering

**DOWN**

- 1 Mist
- 2 Singer Cara
- 3 Essential
- 4 City of Australia
- 5 Stock units
- 6 Pawns
- 7 Jackson 5 hit
- 8 Kind of bliss
- 9 Learned
- 12 Makes fun of
- 16 Lawyer: Abbr.
- 21 City of Australia
- 22 Places
- 23 - Comet
- 24 Chilean leader of the '70s
- 25 Carpentry tools
- 27 Strolls along
- 29 Stopwatch button
- 30 Leek's cousin
- 31 Take, as advice
- 32 Abounds
- 36 One - million

**CRYPTOQUOTE** 1-26

AFSM AWWOC PSDWZS YMDGJSV, Q CFJGG IWDYC AQLF RFWLWHVJRF. AFSM QZJHSC PSDWZS QMJOSEJLS, Q CFJGG PS DWMLSM L AQLF CQCGSMDS. JMCSG JOJZC

**Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE: TRUTH IS FOUND NEITHER IN THE THESIS NOR THE ANTI-THESIS, BUT IN AN EMERGENT SYNTHESIS WHICH RECONCILES THE TWO. GEORG HEGEL**

**Yesterday's answer**

BACALL LESE  
ARABIA EPEE  
BODILY NINE  
EMILY VICAR  
LAZE MINUTE  
NOON ROD  
JOE COCKER  
SAP TREE  
PIECES ETAS  
RANAT SPORT  
ALES FASTER  
WANT IGUANA  
LIDS REPLAY

**A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

I'M MAKING A ROBOT TO REPLACE SOLDIERS. WHAT DOES IT DO? NOTHING YET. OH, HE'S A "BEETLE-BOT".

**HENRY** by Don Trachte