

When you get a good thing, you don't let it go. Unless of course you instantly find a better thing. A better thing is almost always greater than a good thing. This is great advice when it comes to choosing fish at the frozen food section. A fresh fish is a good thing. A fish that smiles and waves at you is fresher, hence a better thing.

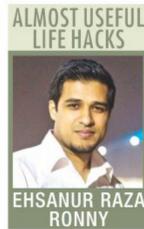
That brings us to our traffic laws in Bangladesh and the way it is applied. In most developed countries, traffic laws primarily deal with actual driving violations. You are either going too fast or you have your car parked where it shouldn't be, such as on top of a pedestrian. Getting people for such violations would be a good thing. But getting people for other violations is a better thing. And profitable too.

We follow a seasonal system of traffic laws. Most of the times, we can go about like wildebeests in a stampede. But when big festivities like Eid or Dubiously Happy New Year come about, traffic vigilance goes up. Cars and bikes are stopped each time with certain formulaic checks. Are the papers in order? Is it on fire? Are there drugs inside? Why is the car dirty?

Back to that good versus better analogy. Once, cars used to be stopped to check if papers were in order. People became wise. They got their papers in order. That left our diligent upholders of all things traffic-related to flip through

the papers and give it back reluctantly. There was little to find wrong. And that was a good thing. But now they found a better thing. They suddenly decided additional lights, what we often call "fog lights", are illegal. Unless they came with the car from factory, that is.

People are being fined for having "illegal" fog lights. One sergeant who stopped me to check papers replied fog lights are a hazard to society. They blind oncoming drivers. I assume if they are fitted from factory, the blinding of oncoming drivers is completely acceptable. He shuffled away as I ran after him with more questions.



That is not all. They look at wheel sizes now, something that is never in question anywhere in the world. The original size is stated in the car registration papers. Most people eventually get better tyres which often come in bigger sizes. Some just want prettier wheels which usually come in larger sizes. Boom. You have just violated the law by about Tk 2000. Do larger wheels and tyres cause danger to the roads? It is the same as wearing sneakers versus formal shoes.

Using the "originality logic", I asked about those metal bumpers welded on to protect the plastic bumpers. Those never came with the cars and they add about 10 inches to the cars stated length in the registration papers. I was asked to quickly move along. CNG cylinders? The traffic sergeant I spoke to also moonlighted as a magician. He disappeared.

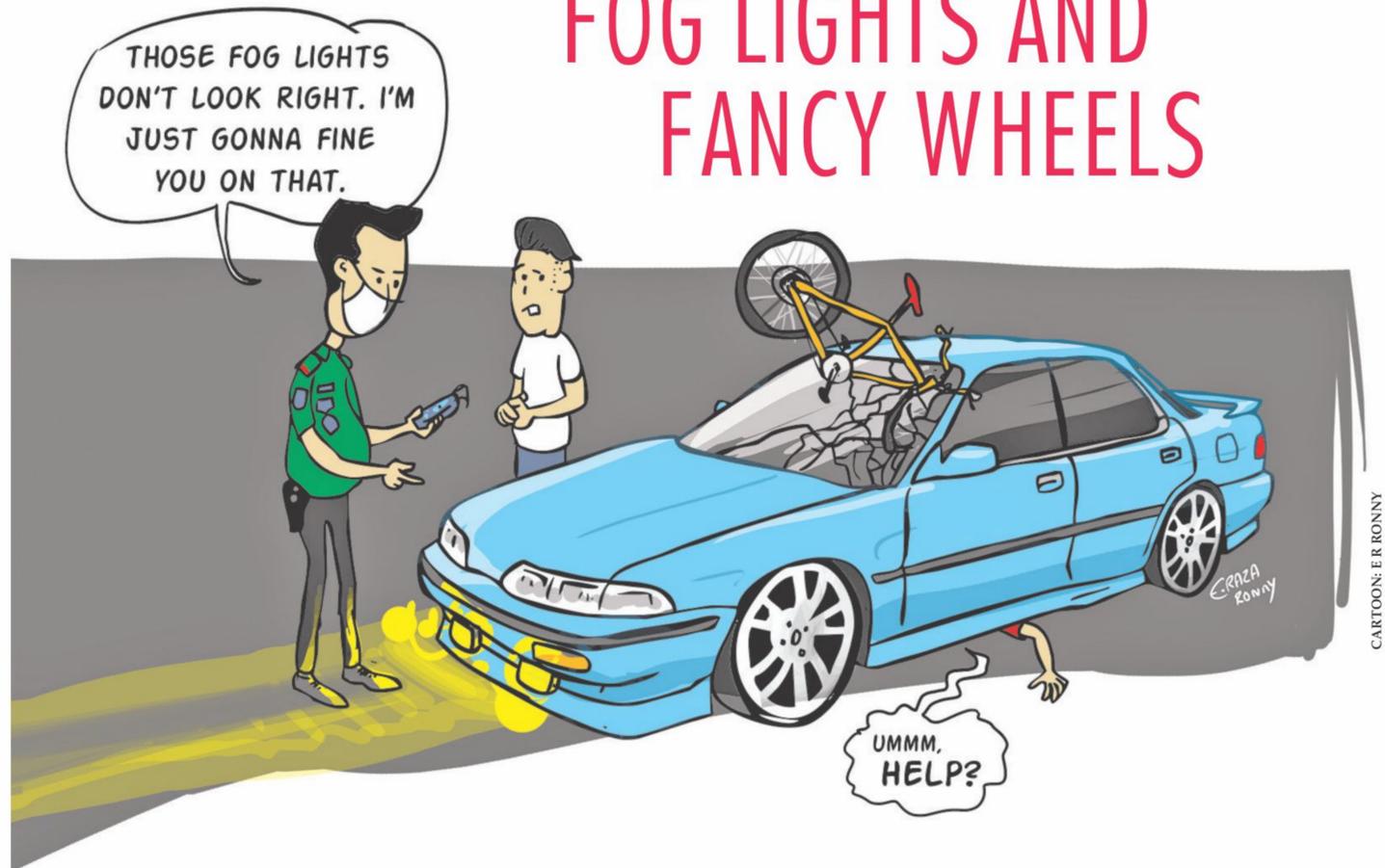
All this started happening when the DMP Traffic Division started measuring performance of the officers according to how many tickets they have issued. More numbers prove more efficiency. All this while the traffic system continues to crawl slower than a drunken snail.

**We follow a seasonal system of traffic laws. Most of the times, we can go about like wildebeests in a stampede. But when big festivities like Eid or Dubiously Happy New Year come about, traffic vigilance goes up.**

About 280 new cars get registered for use from BRTA every day. To manage this immense load, our traffic police are focusing on oversized wheels and fog lights. It seems, improving visibility and traction for the cars is the real danger.

*Ehsanur Raza Ronny is a confused dad, all-round car guy, model car builder, and cartoonist. He is also Editor of Shift (automobiles), Bytes (technology), and Next Step (career) of The Daily Star.*

## ENEMIES OF TRAFFIC SAFETY FOG LIGHTS AND FANCY WHEELS



Rafique Ahmed sits relishing his 300 taka coffee. An employee at a top MNC, Rafique is one of thousands of citizens affected by the latest law that resulted in the federalisation of the VIP areas of the country. "It had to be done. We cannot be expected to be held to the same standards as the rest of the country. We do so much more," he said.

A recent landmark ruling declared that VIP areas will now have the right to self-govern and distance themselves from the utter rubbish that makes up the rest of the country. "The rest of the country does not think progressively like us. Look around you; the first thing you notice is that there are no rickshaws anywhere. Why should rickshaws ply on VIP roads when you cannot even be a VIP without a car?" Rafique wondered.

The rickshaw ban is just one step in a move towards creating a brand-new distinguishable identity for the so-called "tri-state" area. Police check-posts have been set up every few metres to ensure thorough searching of CNGs and other middle-class modes of transport that dare to transgress the new boundaries. "We know that the shadiest elements use CNG so we put up all these check-posts to harass them and hopefully dissuade them from visiting the area in the future," a constable at one such check-post stated.

To ensure that the sensitive residents of the area are not too heavily exposed to poverty, it has also been declared a 'beggar-free zone', with rule-breakers risking up to BDT 20,000 in fines. BDT that they don't have because, if they did, would they be begging? "Most beggars own huge swathes of land. They beg because for them it's just a poverty, not a necessity," Lima Chowdhury, another resident, opined. "Yesterday while in traffic, a woman came up to my car window, carrying a tiny baby in her arms. He was totally clothed. It broke my heart. I wrote a huge status on Facebook about it and am now seeing a therapist," she added, explaining that exposure to such things can prove to be very traumatic.

"Poverty is a reality of the country, even if there is very little here. We are working on showcasing whatever little poverty exists here in a palatable manner," the new mayor of the area stated. He mentioned plans to turn a huge slum in the area, an eye sore to be honest, into the famed 'Poverty Museum' for people to come and gawk at 'poor' people going about their daily business. "Do you know these people don't even know what brown bread is? It is really shocking," Muktar Mia, a visitor to the slum area told this correspondent.

"With the museum up and running, it will be even easier for foreign aides and tourists to come and take all



## VIP AREA DECLARED SEMI-AUTONOMOUS



CARTOON: SADAT

the photos they desire in one place. They will not need to travel to Lalbagh Kella or Korail to pick up their favourite slum children to pose next to with their arms deceptively hovering above the little shoulders. They will find them all here and as photo-ready as ever," continued Muktar.

In more signs of progress, breast-feeding stations and footpaths for the blind were also set up in the area. Although no one uses the breast-feeding stations and

the blind can't really tell where their footpaths are, it still looks good.

When queried about any laws governing the area, the Mayor said it was unnecessary. "We are going towards a noocracy. In the land of rich, we don't have laws because we are truly above them. Are white collar crimes even crimes? That's like saying having an offshore account is a crime," he said.

*Osama Rahman is a Sub-editor, The Daily Star.*

### CRUELTY BEFORE SACRIFICE

After page 12

"In developed countries, livestock carriers are specially designed with fans and fitted with fodder cases. We don't have those vehicles in Bangladesh. We advise the farmers to maintain 28 square feet of space for each of their full-grown cows. In Bangladesh's reality, it is not possible to maintain this space in a cattle truck. So the sufferings of these cattle seem to be inevitable at present," says Dr Abdul Halim, Chief Veterinary Officer at Central Veterinary Hospital.

"A full-grown cow can remain standing for a maximum 3-4 hours. If it takes longer, it will certainly affect its health," he adds.

Even after reaching the cattle market, these animals do not get any better treatment. The environment is dirty and unhygienic, and food and water are scarce. "The cattle market is full of thick mud and the pens are so dirty that I have to buy separate dishes to feed my animals. Water supply is not at all adequate. I paid the owner of the market



PHOTO: STAR FILE

an additional BDT 7000 to manage two electric fans for my two bulls but those fans never arrived. Now, my bulls are suffering due to extreme heat and mud," says Abdul Gani, a cattle dealer who brought two bulls from Mymensingh to the Mohammadpur cattle market.

However, many cattle dealers are feeding their cattle in those dirty pens increasing the risk of infection. A medical

team of two veterinary doctors with three compounders are supposed to be present in every cattle market. However, their presence could hardly be seen in the Mohammadpur cattle market.

According to renowned Islamic scholar, Shykh Al Mansur, "Cruelty towards animals is strictly prohibited in Islam. It is deplorable how we treat animals in Bangladesh, particularly the

animals that are meant to be sacrificed for Allah. Sacrificial animals should be treated with great care and love. We should remember that these animals are embracing death for the cause of our service to Allah."

It has been mentioned in Al-Furu Min al-Kafi Lil-Kulini (6:230) that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to a man who was sharpening his knife in the presence of the animal: "Do you intend to inflict death on the animal twice—once by sharpening the knife within its sight, and once by cutting its throat?" Again, Hazrat Ali (RA) one of the righteous caliphs of Islam, says, "Do not slaughter sheep in the presence of other sheep, or any animal in the presence of other animals."

However, the way we treat these poor animals, from the perilous journey to the cattle markets to the very end of their lives, it seems that most of us have completely forgotten the message that Islam had preached through this great religious rite.

*Md Shahmawaz Khan Chandan can be contacted at shahmawaz.khan@thedailystar.net*