

DISCUSSION



ELITA KARIM

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

The residents in urban Dhaka are slowly stepping back into their normal lives – attending late night weddings, stepping into an eatery near the office for lunch, and meeting up with friends for weekend coffee as well. However, the fact that fear still looms over the city, after the July 1 attacks at the Holey Artisan, is evident. Coffee shops and restaurants which would stay open till after midnight – where friends would get together for hot chocolate, meetings would take place or someone would simply sit there with a book or a lap top – now close by 10 pm. In fact, to add to it all, many restaurants are now closing down because of the recent drives by Rajuk.

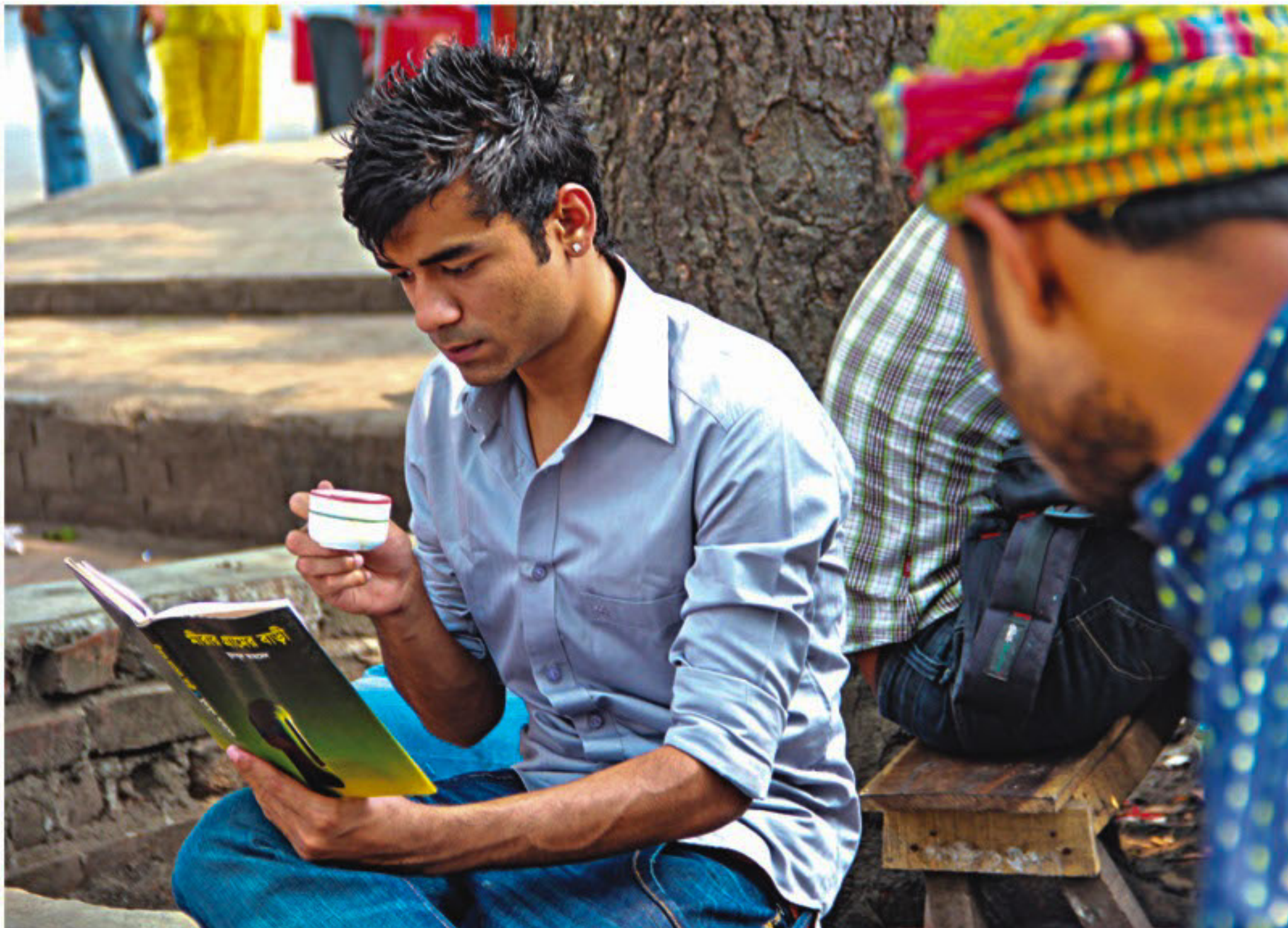
In a city where the weekend activity mainly comprises of eating out, life has become monotonous, now that most of the Dhakaites prefer to spend time with friends and loved ones in the safety of their homes.

However, in a city like Dhaka, which showcases culture, history, heritage, literature and so much of vibrancy – surely there are things that families and friends can do for quality and fun!

For Saira Tasnim Sabeen, eating out was almost a daily affair. She and her friends made it a point to eat out at new places in the city. "It doesn't matter how far away the restaurant or the eatery is, or what the ambience is like, I check out everything!" A banker, but most importantly a food reviewer, Sabeen says that if 52 percent of a restaurant is 'food', the rest is 'service, approach and attitude. "It doesn't matter how fancy a restaurant is – if the environment seems hostile, arrogant and unfriendly, customers will run away! You need to be in a home away from your



home." At the moment, the perfect home that Sabeen enjoys away from her home is a tea shop right next to her office. "I love the shop and the tea is amazing!" she exclaims. "They prepare the tea with the cream of the milk and the process is very specific. However, I like it mainly because sometimes I step out of the chaos inside the bank and read in the tea shop. It's safe and friendly and no less than one of the fancy coffee shops that I go to with friends."



Tayeb Ahmed is a businessman in the Dhanmondi area, lives with his mother, wife and two children in Panthopoth. Hailing from Barishal, Ahmed moved to the capital in the mid 90s and fell in love with it. "As a student of Dhaka College, I used to walk to all the areas in the city," he says. "I think I have seen more of the city than any other man my age! I know where the best tea is sold, where the palmists sit, the alleyways in Bangla Bazaar and a cheap place to eat rice in Motijheel. Now that I am a businessman, I get to go to Uttara, Gulshan and Mirpur to different buying houses as well. As a student I would also just hop on to a bus and visit districts and zilas. Bangladesh is indeed a very beautiful country!"

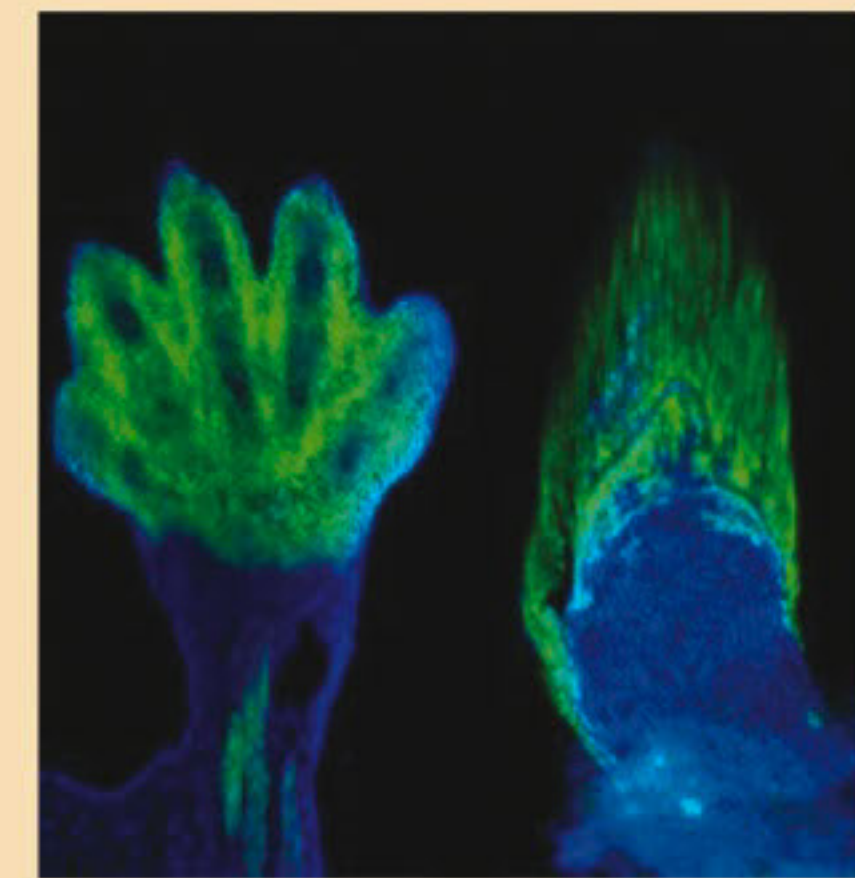
Ahmed makes sure that his family members are exposed to all the landmarks in Dhaka and makes it a point to pay a visit every week. "My children are a regular at the Shishu Park, the Sreeti

Shodh and even the different exhibition halls where they enjoy paintings and photography. A few months back, there was a folk musician who had come all the way from Shitakundo, Chittagong and was performing at the Mukto Moncho in Dhanmondi. We went there a little early so that the family could relax and have a bit to eat. My son and I played football, after which, we listened to the music. Next week, I plan to take my family to the National Museum. If you think of it, there are many activities one can do in Dhaka city with family members and they are not expensive at all!"

It's time to get up and discover Dhaka the way we never did – exploring the monuments, taking a heritage walk, boating, visiting the Bishwa Shahittyo Kendra, or just kicking ball at the nearby park. As long as you are a part of a group and know that you are in a safe area, go ahead and enjoy!

QUIRKY SCIENCE

UNDERSTANDING FISH FINS



One of the great transformations required for the descendants of fish to become creatures that could walk on land was the replacement of long, elegant fin rays by fingers and toes. In the Aug. 17, 2016 issue of Nature, scientists from the University of Chicago show that the same cells that make fin rays in fish play a central role in forming the fingers and toes of four-legged creatures.

After three years of painstaking experiments using novel gene-editing techniques and sensitive fate mapping to label and track developing cells in fish, the researchers describe how the small flexible bones found at the ends of fins are related to fingers and toes, which are more suitable for life on land.

"When I first saw these results you could have knocked me over with a feather," said the study's senior author, Neil Shubin, PhD, the Robert R. Bensley Distinguished Service Professor of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at the University of Chicago. Shubin is an authority on the transition from fins to limbs.

"For years," he said, "scientists have thought that fin rays were completely unrelated to fingers and toes, utterly dissimilar because one kind of bone is initially formed out of cartilage and the other is formed in simple

connective tissue. Our results change that whole idea. We now have a lot of things to rethink."

To unravel how fins might have transformed into wrists and fingers, the researchers worked mostly with a standard fish model: the zebrafish.

Tetsuya Nakamura, PhD, a postdoctoral scholar in Shubin's lab, used a gene-editing technique, CRISPR/Cas, in zebrafish to delete important genes linked to limb-building, and then selectively bred zebrafish with multiple targeted deletions. He spent more than two years building and cross breeding the fish mutants, a project that began at the Marine Biological Laboratories in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

Most theories of motivation have championed the pleasure principle, where our choices of daily activities aim to minimise the negative effects and maximise the positive effects. However, it is currently not clear to researchers how to reconcile this idea with the fact that we all have to engage routinely in unpleasant, yet necessary activities.

To address this question, a team of researchers, led by Maxime Taquet, a research fellow at the Boston Children's Hospital, developed a smartphone application to monitor in real-time the activities and moods of over 28,000 people.

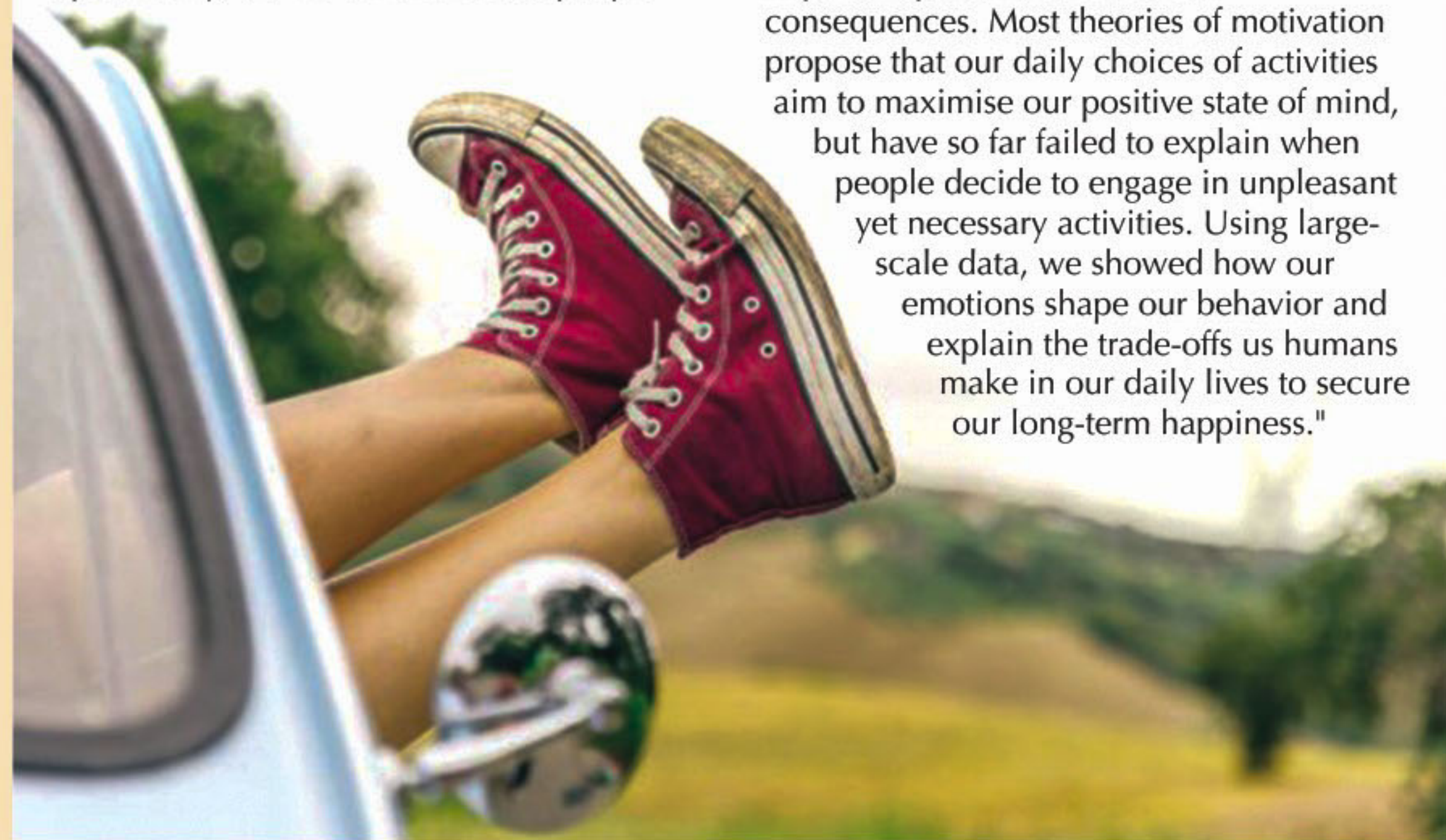
The team found that, rather than following the pleasure or hedonic principle, people's choices of activities instead consistently followed a hedonic flexibility principle. Specifically, the model shows that people

MANAGING LONG TERM HAPPINESS

were more likely to engage in mood-increasing activities such as playing sport when they felt bad, and engage in useful, but mood-decreasing activities such as doing housework when they felt good.

These findings from large-scale data clarify how hedonic considerations shape human behavior. They may also explain how humans overcome the allure of short-term gains in happiness to maximize their long-term welfare.

Dr. Taquet said: "The decisions we make every day about how to invest our time have important personal and societal consequences. Most theories of motivation propose that our daily choices of activities aim to maximise our positive state of mind, but have so far failed to explain when people decide to engage in unpleasant yet necessary activities. Using large-scale data, we showed how our emotions shape our behavior and explain the trade-offs us humans make in our daily lives to secure our long-term happiness."



STRANGE PROFESSION

READING YOUR FUTURE, KNOWING YOUR FORTUNE!

One of man's oldest and unattained curiosities is to know what lies in the future for him. Even the most advanced technologies cannot confirm us about the things that will happen in future. However, in Gulistan, one of Dhaka's busiest commercial districts,

Shoshodhor Gonok has been unveiling the secrets from the future for past 20 years. His only instrument for doing this impossible task is an opaque, single-handle magnifying glass which he uses to decipher the curious lines drawn on the human palm. With a fee of only

twenty takas, he describes elements from a person's life by reading his or her palm – events from the future, not to mention hidden truths, personal traits and dangerous secrets!

If by any chance, Shoshodhor Gonok notices signs of negativity in his customer's fate, he prescribes the person to wear talismans to evade the unseen danger with the condition that the person will buy the talisman from Shoshodhor only. And for this additional advice, he charges another fee of Taka 20 excluding the cost of talisman. "The talismans are made of holy Ashtadhatu which prevents the Saturn to cast his evil eye on a person. Saturn is the cause of all evil things in the human life," says Shoshodhor. The cost of the talisman ranges between 100 to 500 takas, depending on the nature of the hazard it fights off.

For over two decades, Shoshodhor, the fortune-teller, has been providing a one stop service of revealing future, the hidden hazards and providing the means to prevent them as well. However, he himself has miserably failed to evade the hazards in his own life. Shoshodhor has been evicted several times from many areas of Dhaka by the law enforcers for running illegal and a fraudulent business. He earns only around 3,000 tk per month and with this meagre income he has to run a family of five – his wife and three children. But as a member of the Gonok caste of Hinduism, Shoshodhor cannot leave his ancestral practice of palmistry. Once evicted from a particular area, sexagenarian Shoshodhor can be seen in another part of the capital with his magnifying glass and a placard translating to, "You can read your future here."



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS