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Furniture sales  
surprisingly  
low this Eid



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stem from lack  
of red-ball  
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Pakistan FM  
to attend SCO  
meet in India



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Our picks for  
the best Eid  
entertainment

## RURAL BANGLADESH WOMEN labour force on the rise

More involved in  
economic activities

MD ASADUZZ ZAMAN

Female labour force participation in rural areas has increased significantly in Bangladesh thanks to women's growing involvement in the agriculture sector and urban-rural migration brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic.

In 2016, the female labour force participation rate in rural areas was 38.6 percent. In 2022, it shot up to 50.89 percent, shows the latest edition of the Labour Force Survey that came out last month.

One of the reasons could be the increase in off-farm activities in recent times, which, according to Planning Minister MA Mannan, explains the increase in overall employment in the agriculture sector.

Activities that are related to crops and livestock but occur outside of the field such as processing, packaging and other forms of value addition are termed off-farm activities.

Women are mostly involved in post-harvesting work, said Sheikh Mohammad Sayem, who was a consultant for the latest Labour Force Survey.

The mass lay-offs in garment factories, which mostly employ women, during the pandemic could also explain the spike in rural female labour force participation, he said.

"Those women mostly went back to their villages and got involved with various jobs -- they did not sit idle," said Sheikh Mohammad Sayem, associate professor of agricultural and applied statistics at Bangladesh Agricultural University.

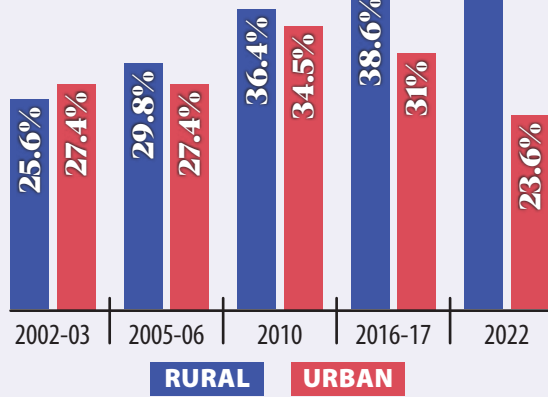
In fact, migration from urban areas to rural regions and other towns has seen a rise, shows the Sample Vital Registration System 2021.

Out of every 1,000 people, eight moved from urban centres to rural areas in 2021, up from 4.7 in 2020. Rural-to-urban migration declined to 30.8 per thousand from 31.3 the previous year, as per the Sample Vital Registration System 2021.

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### MORE RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN LABOUR FORCE THAN URBAN ONES

SOURCE: BBS



## Observers from EU, UK welcome in nat'l election

PM tells British envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will welcome observers from the European Union and the United Kingdom in the upcoming general election, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

She said this when the outgoing UK High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickinson paid a farewell call on her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed the reporters afterwards.

Mentioning that some local election observers have their own agenda, the prime minister said her party has established the voting rights of the people in Bangladesh.

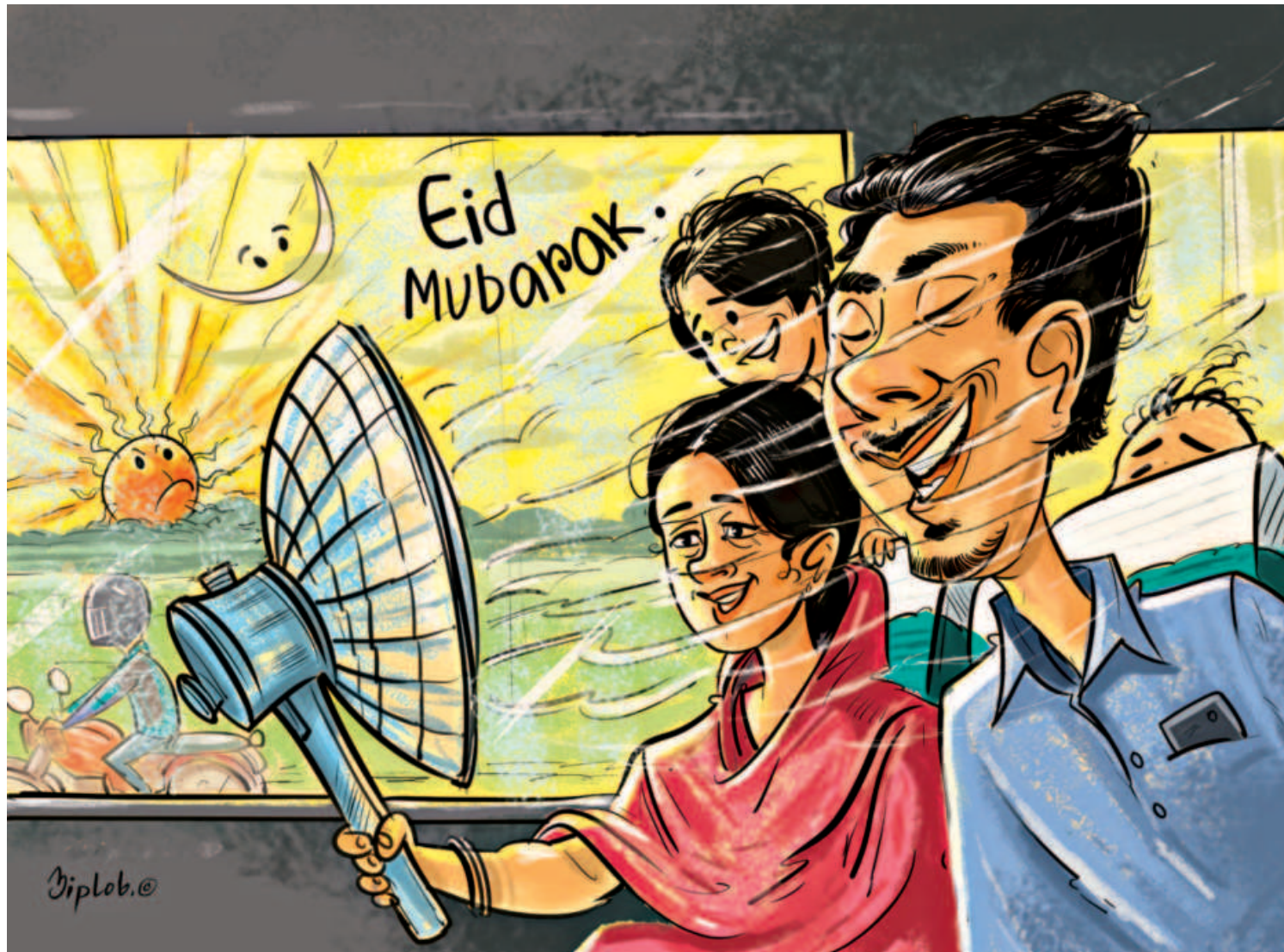
She said the extreme poverty rate has declined to 5.6 percent while the poverty rate to 18.7 percent as democracy continued in Bangladesh.

The UK envoy said his country wants to strengthen further the economic partnership and cooperation in aviation sector with Bangladesh.

He said they want to strengthen the cooperation with Bangladesh to tackle climate change in line with the accord signed between the countries in March.

About the Rohingya issue, Hasina sought cooperation to repatriate the Rohingyas in a sustainable way.

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### EID JOURNEY HOME

## Good, so far

Surge of garment workers heading home  
causes congestion at few points

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people continued to leave Dhaka yesterday to celebrate Eid with their loved ones and their trips were relatively hassle-free.

All trains, except the Chattogram-bound Sonar Bangla Express, left Dhaka on time and no major traffic congestion was reported in the city.

However, there was some traffic at Nabinagar, Joydebpur Chowrasta, Chandra and Baipail, all key intersections on the way to the north and northwestern regions.

The intersections are surrounded by a large number of garment factories that closed for the Eid holidays in the evening.

Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest religious festival of Muslims, will be celebrated across the country tomorrow if the crescent moon of the month of Shawwal is sighted today.

People with some 29 lakh mobile phone connections left Dhaka yesterday, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said on his Facebook page at 5:30pm.

On Tuesday, people with 12.28 lakh SIMs left Dhaka while people with 16 lakh SIMs left

Dhaka on Wednesday, he also mentioned.

People started leaving Dhaka in the morning and formed crowds at bus terminals and outside the Kamalapur Railway Station. The number of passengers increased sharply in the evening.

During a visit to the Gabtoli Bus Terminal around 2:30pm, this correspondent found a relatively small crowd. Many passengers alleged that they were overcharged.

Hemayet Uddin, deputy director (enforcement) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) who was at the terminal's control room, said although they received some complaints of overcharging, the allegations could not be proven.

Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the pressure of passengers was huge in the evening. Congestion was reported from several points on the way to northern districts, he said.

The control room set up by the road transport and bridges ministry at the BRTA, reported tailbacks at Nabinagar, Joydebpur Chowrasta, Chandra and Baipail at 7:00pm.

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### TK 7.5CR BRIBE FOR VISA

## Malaysia recalls two officials from Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Malaysian authorities have recalled and remanded two officers from its high commission in Dhaka on suspicion of receiving bribes of over Tk 7.5 crore for issuing visas for Bangladeshi workers and tourists.

The two suspects -- a man and a woman -- were remanded for three days until yesterday, but it was not sure whether they have been released yet, reports Free Malaysia Today (FMT), an independent news portal of Malaysia.

Sources with knowledge of the investigation said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) discovered "suspicious transactions" involving the bank accounts of the two.

MACC has frozen more than 20 bank accounts and seized assets, estimated to be worth RM3.1 million (Tk 7.5 crore), believed to belong to the two. The assets include eight plots of land.

MACC Chief Commissioner Azam Baki confirmed that the officers had been placed under remand and said the case was being investigated under Section 17(a) of the MACC Act and Section 4(l) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act.

"I do not rule out the possibility that there will be several other arrests that will be made after this," he said.

The Malay Mail newspaper quoted the Malaysian foreign ministry as saying that the two officers arrested by MACC are Immigration

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Hours after the government lifted a ban on bikes on the Padma Bridge, motorcycles form long queues on the Mawa end yesterday. With Eid round the corner, holidaymakers continued to head out of Dhaka for their homes in villages and towns.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

### BUSINESS

## Banks hike deposit rate

Banks in Bangladesh are increasing the interest rate on deposits to pull funds with a view to tackling the liquidity shortage and meeting a higher demand for loans.

It comes as good news for savers, who saw the real return on their deposits turn negative as the interest rate has continued to remain below the inflation rate.

The weighted average interest rate on deposits stood at 4.31 per cent in February, the highest in nearly two years.

STORY ON B1