

### Djokovic out of French Open with injury

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### Our forests are disappearing when we need them most

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### South Africa's ANC weighs up partners after polls

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## Modi wins but resurgent INDIA steals the show

AGENCIES

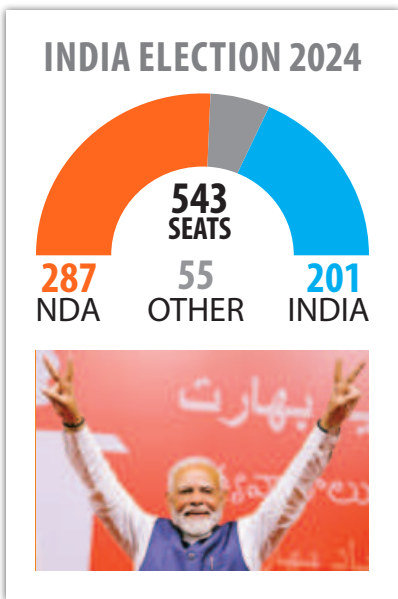
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political alliance won India's weeks-long general election yesterday, but his Hindu nationalist party lost its outright majority for the first time in a decade.

The outcome spooked investors, with stocks falling steeply as emerging results showed that Modi would, for the first time since sweeping to power in 2014, have to depend on at least three disparate regional parties whose political loyalties have wavered over the years.

This, analysts say, could introduce some uncertainty into policymaking after a decade in which Modi has ruled with an authoritative hold.

NDA, the alliance led by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), secured a parliamentary majority at the country's general election, official results showed late yesterday.

With a few constituencies still left to declare, it had secured 272 seats, enough for a majority in the 543-seat



parliament, results on the election commission website showed.

The BJP itself had won 224 seats and was leading in 16 more for a projected total of 240 -- by far the

largest party but a significant drop from the 303 seats it won at the last polls in 2019.

The main opposition Congress party had won 88 seats and was leading in 11 for a projected total of 99, nearly double the 52 it secured five years ago.

The NDA coalition was on track to win at least 291 seats.

Modi's BJP won a majority on its own in 2014, ending India's era of unstable coalition governments, and repeated the feat in 2019.

Modi said people had placed their faith in the BJP-led coalition for a third time and it was historic, in his first comments since the counting of votes began.

"I bow to the people for this affection and assure them that we will continue the good work done in the last decade to keep fulfilling the aspirations of people," he posted on X.

Markets had soared on Monday after exit polls on June 1 projected Modi and BJP would register a big victory, and the ruling National

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## 14-party allies vent anger at AL

### Reject ruling party's plan for joint programme

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Several key partners in the Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday came down heavily on the ruling party, and rejected an AL plan to go for joint programmes until the ruling party changes its attitude towards the allies.

Venting their anger, the alliance partners at a meeting with senior AL leader Amir Hossain Anu, also coordinator of the 14-party alliance, sought to know if the alliance meant anything to the ruling party anymore, meeting sources said.

And even if they go for any joint programmes with AL, they will speak out about market syndicates

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## Tight budget in austere times

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

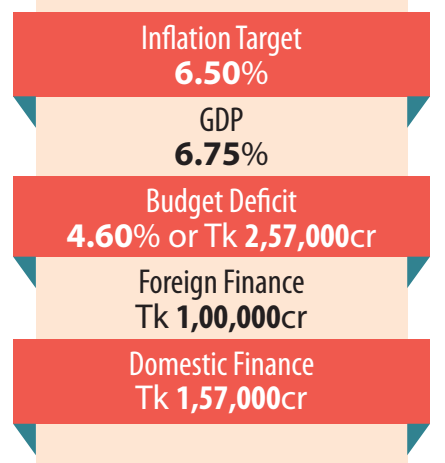
With an aim to restore macroeconomic stability, reduce inflation, and contain pressure on foreign currency reserves, Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali is going to place a Tk 7,96,900 crore budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year tomorrow.

"The upcoming budget will be a tight and cautious one," a top finance ministry official involved with the budget formulation told The Daily Star.

The new budget is likely to be just 4.6 percent bigger than the current one, much lower than the year-on-year average spike of 11 percent seen in the last five years. The current fiscal year's budget was 12.35 percent larger than the previous year's.

Even during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic, which brought the economy to a halt amid nationwide lockdowns, budgets grew around 9 percent.

The finance minister is going to place his first budget at a time when the economy is going through a prolonged economic crisis, driven by both external



and internal factors. The government's fiscal position has tightened owing to lower-than-expected revenue collections. Therefore, it is not possible to raise the budget size as per expectations.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said the ongoing crisis has three dimensions: high inflation, the US dollar

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## Mamata aura prevails as BJP stumbles in West Bengal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The aura of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee remains undiminished even after 13 years in power. She reaffirmed her status as the numero uno street-savvy politician as her party Trinamool Congress coasted to a memorable victory in parliamentary elections in the state.

TMC has already won 16 seats and is leading in 13 other constituencies. Its nearest challenger BJP have so far won two seats and is leading in 10 others.

TMC's performance, if sustained until the final results, would mark its second-best showing in the state since the 2014 elections when it secured 34 seats.

Its victory came in the face of a sustained campaign by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on the two issues of alleged corruption and atrocities on women



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## 'A victory that feels like defeat'

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

By all accounts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party looks set to return for a rare third consecutive term to rule India. It has emerged as the largest single party but failed to reach the majority mark on its own. The opposition INDIA alliance led by Congress made a strong comeback that has done the spade work for a check and balance in a democracy.

How? As an analyst has aptly commented: the election has given a victory that feels like defeat and a defeat that is akin to a win.

With Modi's and BJP's repeated claim of '400 paar' shredded, the mandate has dented Modi's electoral invincibility. The INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) has come out of the polls as a force to reckon with in India's politics as a viable opposition in the time to come.

The opposition bloc has reversed all exit poll predictions by leading in at least 228 seats, according to the latest numbers. However, despite a stiff contest, the BJP-led NDA is inching closer towards the 300-mark, standing at 297 at the moment.

From 52 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, its worst performance in parliamentary elections, Congress has come a long way this year. The party is leading in 99 seats. Even though the party stares at another five-year stint in the opposition benches in the Lok Sabha, the result is likely to shape its future political course, policies and strategies. As a senior leader of the party from Uttar Pradesh said, "Some defeats are more important than victories because they provide you the learning curve leading to a resurgent journey."

Congress is set to become the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok

### NEWS ANALYSIS

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## MALAYSIA ENTRY KL unlikely to extend deadline for Bangladeshis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia has no plans to extend the May 31 deadline for foreign workers' entry into the Southeast Asian country even though Bangladesh appealed for allowing in 17,000 Bangladeshi migrants who have visas but missed the deadline.

Malaysian Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail told reporters in Penang yesterday that all factors, including quota approval, health checks, visa processing, and flight arrangements, were considered before setting the May 31 deadline.

"So, if you ask me whether there would be an extension of time, the answer is no. We announced the May 31 deadline a long time ago," reported Malaysian daily

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Liquid waste flowing into the Shitalakkhya from a storm sewer. In the absence of consistent and robust measures to protect them, our rivers continue to be victims of extreme pollution for years on end. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

# Land the size of Dhaka city degrades every year

### Finds govt study, raises alarm over food security

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Soil degradation in Bangladesh is happening at a faster pace than earlier thought, and it is threatening the country's food security.

Every year, the physical, chemical, and biological or economic properties of soil are degrading on around 270 sq km area, roughly the size of Dhaka city.

"If the trend continues, there will be no cultivable land within the next 63 years," said Ameer Md Zahid, chief scientific officer at the Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI) of the Department of Environment (DoE).

The SRDI conducted a study which revealed that the trend of soil degradation has been continuing for 20 years.

Today is World Environment Day. This year's theme is "Our Land, Our Future. We are #GenerationRestoration". This year's theme emphasises the importance of restoring land,

**"If the trend continues, there will be no cultivable land within the next 63 years."**  
AMEER MD ZAHID, chief scientific officer at SRDI

combating desertification, and enhancing resilience to drought.

Ameer told The Daily Star that if immediate actions were not taken to stop the soil degradation, the country's food security would be threatened.

Soil degradation is the decline in soil fertility, organic matter depletion, acidification, salinisation, soil pollution, soil erosion, riverbank erosion, sand overwash, drought, waterlogging, soil sealing, and ecosystem degradation.

The SRDI study, styled "Land

Degradation in Bangladesh 2020", found that soil degradation of moderate to very severe levels happened on 1.124 crore hectares in 2020. The study was published in 2022.

"It is about 76.2 percent of the country. The degraded land is 0.54 million hectares [5.4 lakh] higher than the previous estimation of 10.70 million [1.070 crore] hectares of 2000," the report said.

Experts said poor soil health has a direct impact on the country's life, agriculture, and the environment.

They said the country's soil is deteriorating mainly due to the excessive use of chemical fertilisers, rising salinity, industrial pollution, deforestation, and the improper dumping of electronic and medical wastes.

They also blamed the population boom, temperature rise, and excessive cultivation for the soil

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## The murder plan was finalised at a Kolkata eatery

### Arrestee 'confesses' to court

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

It was Tanvir Bhuiyan who lured the Jhenaidah-4 MP Anwarul Azim Anar to Kolkata as part of a mission to kill him.

He even assisted in the murder, which took place at a flat in Kolkata's New Town, and ensured the death by pressing a pillow to Azim's face.

Tanvir crossed the Benapole border and went to Kolkata on May 6 as per the plan, made by his uncle Amanullah alias Shimul Biswas, who coordinated the killing.

Tanvir took a room in a residential hotel named "Trishib" in New Town and held meetings there with Amanullah multiple times to discuss the execution.

He disclosed all these details in a confessional statement before a Dhaka court yesterday, said sources at the court and the Detective Branch of police.

After recording his statement, the court sent Tanvir to jail.

Earlier at noon, Mahfuzur Rahman, the investigation officer of the abduction case and also a senior assistant commissioner of DB, produced Tanvir before the court.

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