



West Bengal records 92% turnout in first phase of polling

Second phase on April 29

AGENCIES

Voting for Tamil Nadu assembly elections and the first phase of the West Bengal assembly elections concluded yesterday at 7:00pm, with an exceptionally high voter turnout.

West Bengal saw an overall voter turnout of 91.91 percent in Phase 1 of the polls, while Tamil Nadu, which voted in a single phase on April 23, saw a voter turnout of 84.29 percent.

In the 2021 WB assembly polls, which was conducted amid the Covid-19 pandemic, turnout was recorded at 82.30 percent.

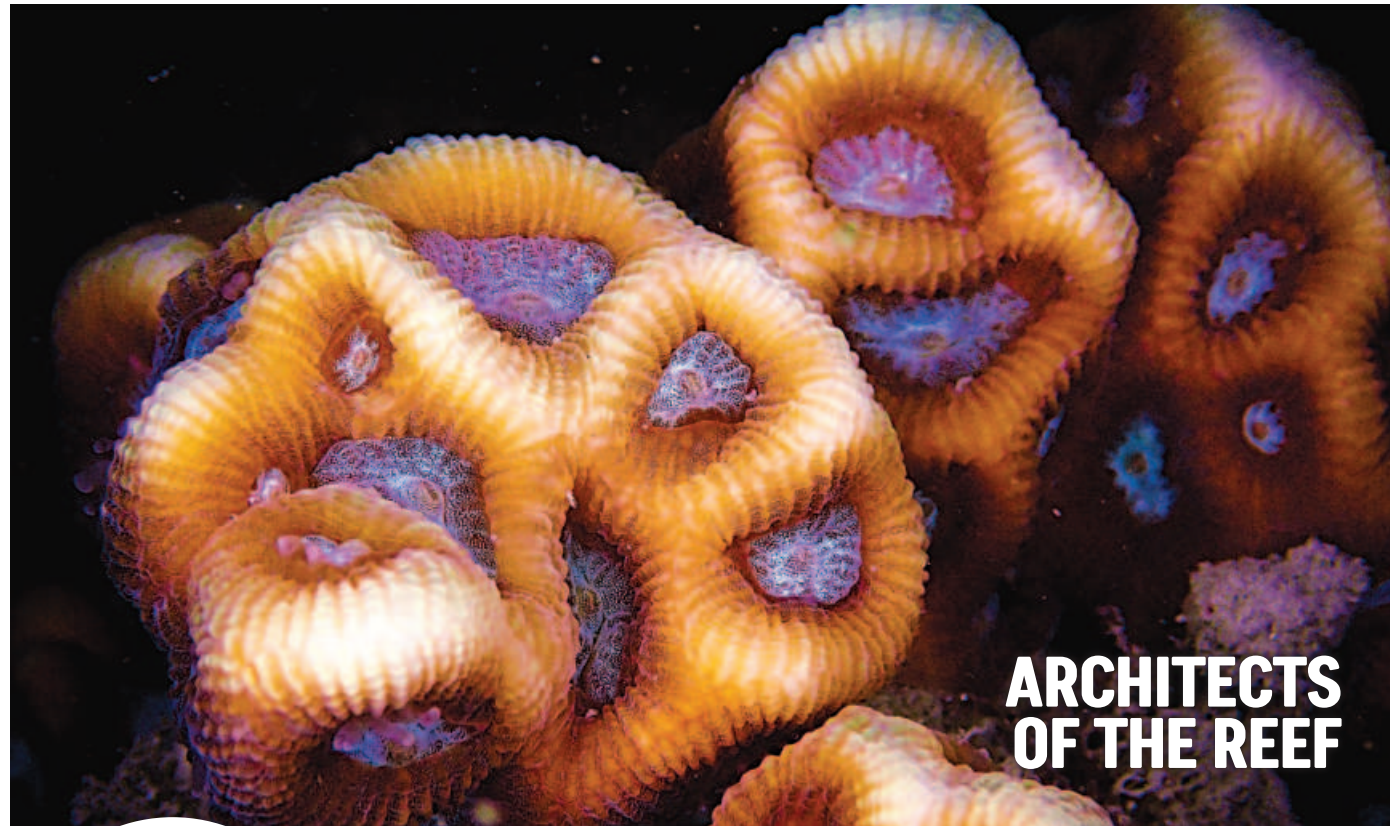
In the first phase, voting took place across a total of 152 constituencies, including key seats like Nandigram, Darjeeling, Siliguri, Cooch Behar, and Jalpaiguri.

The BJP is hoping to seize power from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. It has never governed the state of roughly 100 million people and has mounted an all-out push to wrest control.

While the contest is expected to be close, the TMC, in power since 2011, is projected to retain control for a fourth term. Several opinion polls show the party maintaining an edge.

Ahead of the first round of polling, the deletion of 9.1 million names from the electoral rolls, more than 10 percent of the electorate, has drawn sharp criticism from political parties and rights groups. The revision process, known as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), has been carried out across states and territories, with the Modi

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A Favia-type brain coral rests on a reef in the Bay of Bengal off Saint Martin's Island, identifiable by its tightly packed yet individually walled polyps. Found in shallow reef flats, lagoons, and back reef zones, these corals build slow-growing, dome-shaped colonies that form part of the reef's structural foundation. They survive through a dual feeding strategy -- hosting symbiotic algae for photosynthesis and extending tentacles at night to capture plankton. While many species in this group are listed from Least Concern to Near Threatened by the IUCN, their future is increasingly uncertain. Corals are vital to marine ecosystems, supporting nearly a quarter of all ocean life, yet rising sea temperatures are triggering widespread bleaching, weakening reefs at an unprecedented rate.

PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR

EC clears 49 for reserved seats

NCP's Monira disqualified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday declared 49 out of 53 nomination papers valid for the reserved women's seats election in the 13th national parliament, scheduled for May 12.

Returning Officer Md Moin Uddin Khan announced at the EC auditorium that four nominations were cancelled, including that of Monira Sharmin, a retired official of a government bank and leader of National Citizen Party (NCP).

With her disqualification, one of the 50 reserved seats has fallen vacant and will later be opened for a fresh contest among all parties and alliances, EC officials said.

Assistant Returning Officer Md Monir Hossain added that under the Jatiya Sangsad (Reserved Women's Seat) Election Act, 2004, a vacant seat allows all alliances to contest.

The cleared nominations include all 36 candidates chosen by the BNP-led alliance, 12 out of 13 from the Jamaat-led alliance, and one independent candidate.

Scrutiny of nomination papers was held on Wednesday and yesterday. Appeals against the scrutiny can be filed on April 26 between 9:00am

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Don't turn away measles patients

DGHS orders hospitals, asks them to arrange extra beds if needed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hospitals have been instructed by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to stop transferring patients with measles symptoms on account of a shortage of beds.

If necessary, hospitals must arrange additional beds, according to the notice issued on Tuesday.

Referrals will be allowed only when patients are in need of highly specialised treatment. In such instances, hospitals must follow the designated referral chain -- from upazila to district hospitals, then to medical college hospitals, and finally to specialised facilities.

The directive also warns that any deviation from these instructions will result in accountability for the head of the respective hospital.

DGHS Director (hospital) Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan confirmed the issuance of the directive to The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, another patient died of measles in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, raising this year's death toll to 39, said the DGHS.

In addition, the DGHS recorded four more deaths with measles-like symptoms during the same period, taking the number of suspected measles deaths to 194.

In the last 24 hours, 125 new confirmed cases were recorded, raising the total to 4,059. During the same period, 1,170 suspected measles cases were recorded, bringing the total suspected cases to 28,334.

Till yesterday, 18,845 patients were admitted to hospitals with measles and suspected measles cases; of them, 15,728 recovered and got discharged.

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Rohingya exodus surges by 90%

They are fleeing Bangladesh, Myanmar in search of better life, says Save the Children



AFP, Dhaka

The number of Rohingya refugees fleeing Bangladesh and Myanmar by boat has increased by 90 percent compared with last year, Save the Children said yesterday, based on United Nations figures.

Many Rohingya who escape persecution in war-torn Myanmar undertake perilous sea journeys every year in search of better living conditions, travelling on overcrowded, rickety boats often operated by trafficking networks.

Khin Maung, a member of the United Council Rohingya (UCR), an elected refugee council in

Bangladesh, said the statistics were deeply "upsetting".

He said there were awareness programmes about the risks of the journey, but that people were desperate.

"As our children see no future, no clear prospects of repatriation, and face the absence of formal education, they risk their lives," he told AFP.

More than a million Rohingya refugees, many who fled Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017, live in vast refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar.

"Children and their families face rising insecurity and inadequate

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Rooppur set for fuel loading on April 28

300MW expected by early Aug

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

The Rooppur nuclear power plant will finally begin operational activities with a fuel loading ceremony on April 28, marking the debut of unit-1 of the nuclear facility.

Previously, fuel loading was scheduled for April 7, but the deadline was pushed back due to a delay in obtaining the commissioning licence.

However, the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority officially granted the licence for the first unit on April 16, clearing the way for preparations.

Once fuel loading begins, the plant will undergo a series of tests before starting electricity production.

"We expect at least 300MW of electricity to be added to the national grid from unit-1 by the end of July or early August, with full-scale production expected by the end of this year or early next year," said Md Tanvir Miah, public relations

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Govt to form a cell to combat cyberbullying

Hotline, portal planned for faster support to victims

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The government has taken an initiative to establish a dedicated cell under the Prime Minister's Office to combat cyberbullying and strengthen digital safety, according to sources at the PMO.

The move, cleared in principle by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, aims to create a central mechanism to respond to online harassment, particularly on social media platforms, and to provide faster support to victims in a respectful and sensitive manner.

PMO sources said the proposed unit would be part of a broader plan to build a National Online Safety System, designed to offer a simple and accessible way for users to report cyber-related abuse.

The system is expected to include a 24-hour hotline, an online reporting portal, and trained response teams tasked with handling complaints related to cyberbullying, threats, impersonation, and the spread of private information.

Contacted by The Daily Star, an official involved in the planning said, "The idea is to make the reporting process easy and quick so that victims, especially women and young users, feel safe to come forward."

Officials said details of the structure, staffing, and launch timeline of the PMO-led cell are expected to be finalised soon.

According to sources, the PMO will provide overall policy direction and oversee coordination, while several ministries and agencies are expected to be involved

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Tigers seal 3rd straight ODI series win

Beat New Zealand 2-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Najmul Hossain Shanto struck a brilliant century before Mustafizur Rahman claimed a five-wicket haul as Bangladesh defeated New Zealand by 55 runs in the series-deciding third and final ODI to seal a 2-1 series victory at the Bir Shrestho Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Cricket Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The win marked Bangladesh's third consecutive ODI series triumph, following home victories over Pakistan and the West Indies. It is their first such streak since August 2022 and comes after a run of four straight series defeats.

Shanto scored 105 off 119 balls -- his fourth ODI ton -- and shared a crucial 160-run partnership with Litton Das (76 off 91) for the fourth wicket after

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Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrates after notching his fourth ODI century, guiding Bangladesh to a commanding 265 for eight in the series-deciding third and final ODI against New Zealand in Chattogram yesterday. Shanto scored 105 off 119 balls and stitched a crucial 160-run stand with Litton Das to help Bangladesh recover from an early setback, before the bowlers sealed a 55-run victory -- the Tigers' biggest margin win by runs over the Black Caps in ODIs. The win also ensured Bangladesh clinched the series 2-1, marking their third consecutive ODI series triumph.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

JCD men assault two Ducusu leaders inside police station

DU CORRESPONDENT

Two Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) office-bearers were assaulted inside the Shahbagh Police Station compound last night by a group of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

The victims were identified as Ducusu Literature and Cultural Affairs Secretary Musaddiq Ali Ibne Mohammad and Social Welfare Secretary AB Zubair.

The incident occurred when Chhatra Dal activists went to the police station to file a case against Dhaka University student Abdullah Al Mahmud, accusing him of making a derogatory Facebook post about Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman.

At the same time, Abdullah, accompanied by Musaddiq, Zubair, and Ducusu's Liberation War and Democratic Movement Affairs Secretary Fatima Tasnim Zuma, arrived at the station to file a general diary citing security concerns.

Around 7:30pm, an altercation broke out between the two groups, and Chhatra Dal activists attacked Musaddiq and Zubair separately.

Later, senior Chhatra Dal leaders escorted the Ducusu leaders to safety inside the police station.

Witnesses reported that for about 20 minutes, Chhatra Dal activists chanted slogans and demanded the Ducusu leaders be brought out.

The entire time there was no police intervention. Senior Chhatra Dal leaders eventually intervened and moved their activists outside.

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