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# Cut in agri subsidy will hurt farmers

Say experts; allocation reduced by Tk 272cr in proposed budget compared to the current one

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Economists say allocation for the agriculture sector in the new budget is inadequate, and it will not only hurt farmers but may also affect food production.

In the 2024-2025 budget placed at parliament by Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali on Thursday, the allocation for farming and food security is Tk 38,259 crore, which accounts for 4.80 percent of the total.

In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the allocation for farming was 4.97 percent, in the following year, it was 4.71 percent.

In the new budget, the Ministry of Agriculture gets Tk 27,214 crore, up from Tk 25,118 crore in the current fiscal year.

But the subsidy for the agriculture sector in the proposed budget is Tk 17,261 crore, down from Tk 17,533 crore.

Agricultural economist Jahangir Alam said, "Rice production in Bangladesh has grown by just 0.52 percent annually over the last three years, while the population has increased by 1.3 percent.

"When there is not enough investment in the sector, food prices rise. In order to boost grain production, more subsidies for farmers are crucial."

Moreover, fertiliser and oil prices have fallen in the global market, but not in Bangladesh.

"When the Russia-Ukraine war began, fertiliser and oil prices surged. Although the prices fell significantly last year, people in Bangladesh did not benefit from it," he added.

In his speech, Finance Minister Ali said, "Existing incentives to the agriculture sector will be continued since food security is of the highest importance here.

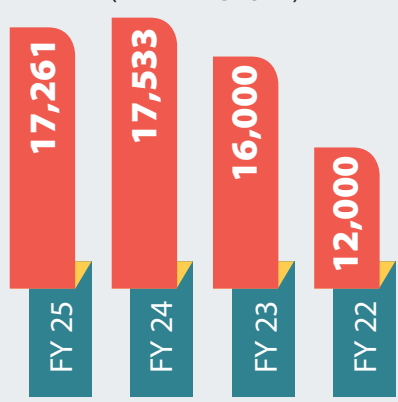
We have given the highest priority to the agriculture sector in our budget."

However, many farmers were disappointed by the new budget.

Haider Ali, a 60-year-old farmer in Chapadaha area of Rangpur, said, "Every year, when a budget is announced, I think perhaps the government will support us. But it turns out the government does not really care much about us."

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on two bighas of land costs him around Tk 30,000, including expenses for fertiliser, seeds, irrigation, planting, and harvesting, he said.

"I get 34 maunds of rice from the land. Currently, the price of each mound is Tk 750. So, my entire harvest sells for Tk 25,500, which is less than what I spend," he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



Canada players celebrate the dismissal of Ireland's Barry McCarthy during their 12-run victory in a Group A fixture of the T20 World Cup at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York yesterday. Batting first, Canada posted 137 for seven before restricting Ireland to 125 for seven.

PHOTO: AFP

## USA stun cricket world, curious fans

AFP, Fort Lauderdale

It was always going to take something big to make Americans pay any attention to cricket and Thursday's stunning victory by the USA over established power Pakistan provided just that moment.

The thrilling Super Over triumph in Dallas by the T20 World Cup debutants over the 2022 finalists and 2009 winners was the biggest upset in the history of the competition.

But while the victory SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Israeli forces batter central, south Gaza

23 more Palestinians killed as offensive enters 9th month

REUTERS, Cairo

With no sign of progress in mediators' arduous efforts to broker a ceasefire in the Gaza offensive, Israeli tanks and warplanes blasted central and southern areas of the enclave overnight, killing at least 23 Palestinians, local medics said yesterday.

Qatari and Egyptian mediators backed by the United States, have tried to halt hostilities, secure the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinians jailed in Israel, and get aid flowing into shattered Gaza

to ease a humanitarian crisis. But sources close to the talks said there were still no signs of a breakthrough as Israeli offensive in the enclave enters nine months.

Russia and China, which hold veto powers in the UN Security Council, raised concerns on Thursday evening with the US draft resolution that would back a proposal for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The council's only Arab member, Algeria, also signaled it was not ready to back the text, diplomats said.

In the Gaza Strip, residents said Israeli tanks advanced further west in the embattled southern city of Rafah skirting the border with Egypt amid fierce gunbattles between Israeli troops and Hamas fighters.

Palestinian health officials said two Palestinians were killed and several wounded in western Rafah from tank shelling there. In central Gaza, Palestinian medics said at least 15 people died overnight in Israeli assaults.

Residents said armoured forces SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Jubo League activist shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Criminals shot dead a Jubo League activist in Jashore Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased, Mohammad Ali, 28, of Bahadurpur village in the same upazila, was a supporter of newly elected upazila chairman Touhid Chakladar Fontu, said locals.

Jashore Sadar upazila SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Palestinian medics rush a person to a hospital in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip following Israeli bombardment yesterday

PHOTO: AFP

## Dazzling new blue ant species 'neela' found in Himalayas



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have discovered a new blue ant species in India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, sparking more interest in the unique biodiversity of this section of the Himalayas.

The rare small ant, named Paraparatrechina neela, reaches a length of less than 2mm and its body is predominantly metallic blue, except for its antennae, mandibles, and legs.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

# Modi to take oath as India PM tomorrow

## President invites him to head new coalition government

AGENCIES

Narendra Modi will take oath as India's Prime Minister for the third successive term tomorrow, as his National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formally presented its claim to the president yesterday to form a government.

World leaders, including Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Nepalese PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal, will attend the swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Modi, along with NDA leaders, yesterday met President Droupadi Murmu and submitted the claim of the alliance, led by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, to run the world's most populous nation for the next five years, the President's Office said.

"I want to assure the people of the country that in the 18th Lok Sabha (lower house) also...we will work with the same pace, same commitment to fulfil aspirations of the people," Modi told reporters outside the president's palace.

It is the first time in a decade that his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - which won majorities outright in 2014 and 2019 - has needed

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