

Precious

FROM PAGE 16
 market, estimated at \$314 million, according to research group Coherent Market Insights.

The precious slime is patiently "milked" from the glands of the snail by dripping water over it using a pipette.

Its raw form is sold to Aden International, a Thai-based cosmetics company that primarily ships its products to Korea and the US.

The sole snail slime producer in Thailand, Aden was started three years ago as a business-savvy solution to the snail infestation in Nakhon Nayok, said founder Kitpong Puttarathuvanun.

And his bet paid off -- Kitpong sells the serum under the Acha brand, but also supplies Korean and American cosmetic companies with a dried powder at 1.8 million baht (\$58,200) per kilogram, he said.

Gold is currently worth \$46,300 a kilogram.

Compared to Aden's snail slime, the mucus produced in China -- milked daily instead of once every three weeks in Thailand -- is valued at about 80,000 baht (\$2,600) per kilogram, Kitpong said.

"We found that our slime was very intense because the snails eat everything, including vegetables, grains and even mushrooms... producing good quality slime," he told AFP, explaining that the mucus can be used to heal sunburn and "heal wounds".

Somkamol Manchun, the doctor in charge of the purification process, said snail mucus contains collagen and elastin -- ingredients that "can make skin firm with less wrinkles".

"It triggers the skin cells... and helps heal the skin".

At the moment, no scientific studies have been done on the curative qualities of snail serum and slime, but snail farmer Phatinisiri is already feeling the market heat up.

Two years ago, she was the first in the area to try farming the slime, she said, and villagers readily gave her what they considered pests.

"Now I buy snails at about 25 baht to 30 baht (about \$1) per kilogram," she said. "But many people are doing snail farms now so the competition is high."

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 He then raped the girl and killed her. Later, he abandoned the body in a nearby pond.

The body was recovered and identified on July 13.

Also yesterday Narayananj police arrested a teenage boy in connection with rape of a mentally challenged girl.

The boy allegedly raped the girl at an abandoned place in the district's Araihasar upazila on Friday noon.

Hearing her scream, the accused fled the scene. Later, the victim's father filed a case with Araihasar Police Station.

The accused admitted his crime in primary interrogation, said police.

Meanwhile, Satkhira police detained a man on charge of raping an eighth grader at Durgapur village in Assasuni upazila of the district, reported UNB.

Locals caught Liton Gazi, 24, of the village and handed him over to police.

Quoting locals, police said Liton used to stalk the victim. He went to her house on Friday night and raped her.

Hearing her scream, neighbours rushed to the spot and rescued her.

According to them, Liton was a drug peddler.

Abdus Salam, officer-in-charge of Assasuni Police Station, said the victim's father filed a case.

In another such incident, Faridpur police arrested a man for allegedly raping a 12-year-old girl at Bangrail village in Saltha upazila of the district on Friday night.

The arrestee is Bhulul Biswas, 28, of the same village.

The victim's mother alleged that Bhulul entered their toilet around 2:00pm on Friday and raped her daughter.

Delower Hossain, officer-in-charge of Saltha Police Station, said they arrested Bhulul in his house.

Bhulul was sent to jail via court, he added.

At Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar, a group of men allegedly raped gang-raped a 12-year-old girl and a 36-year-old widow on Wednesday night.

A case was filed with Chakaria Police Station last night.

According to the teen victim's family, a group of five to six men entered the woman's home and raped the girl.

As the woman tried to save the girl, they raped the woman too around 11:30pm.

They alleged that Harbang Union Parishad Chairman Miranul Islam kept the incident hidden assuring the victims of justice.

Asked, Miranul denied the allegation.

Shafiqul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Chakaria Police Station, said they were conducting drives to arrest the culprits within the shortest possible time.

Ex-convict

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Ex-jihadist of Bangladeshi origin now fights to 'reprogram' extremists

AFP, Washington

Tania Joya has devoted her life to "reprogramming" extremists and reintroducing them into society -- a process she understands well as a "former Islamic jihadist" herself.

"My aim is for them to feel a sense of remorse and to train them so that they can be good citizens once they are released from prison, so they can adjust to society," Joya said during a visit to Washington, to present a project on preventing extremist violence.

Born in 1984 near London to a Muslim Bangladeshi family, Joya grew up confronted by racism and the struggles of integration. She radicalized at age 17, after the September 11 terror attacks in New York and Osama bin Laden's call for a global jihad.

In 2004, she married an American Muslim-convert, Yahya al-Bahrumi (born John Georgelas). She began advocating for an Islamic state, for which her three children would be soldiers.

But in 2013, her husband took her and their children against her will to northwestern Syria to join jihadist insurgents. Joya reported her husband to US authorities and, after three weeks, fled Syria to the United States.

Joya settled in Texas, her husband's home state. There, she rejected Islam and changed her life, divorced and re-married.

Yahya, her first husband, joined the Islamic State group, which would soon control large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. He was in charge



This image grab taken from a video provided by Iran's Revolutionary Guard official website via SEPAH News on July 20, allegedly shows Revolutionary Guard Corps boarding the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz. PHOTO: AFP

Iran on 'dangerous path', warns UK

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 France and Germany joined Britain in condemning the seizure.

The three big European countries are signatories to a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers that Washington undermined by quitting last year, setting Iran's already fragile relations with the West on a downward spiral.

"We have learned with great concern of the seizure of a British vessel by Iranian forces," France's foreign ministry said. "We strongly condemn it and express our full solidarity with the United Kingdom."

A German foreign ministry spokesman said further escalation of regional tensions "would be very dangerous (and)... undermine all ongoing efforts to find a way out of the current crisis."

US President Donald Trump said on Friday he would talk to Britain about the seizure.

Under the pact, Iran agreed to restrict nuclear work in return for lifting sanctions. The European countries opposed the Trump administration's decision to abandon the agreement last year, but have so far failed to fulfil promises to Iran of providing alternative means for it to access world trade.

Hunt said London's reaction to Friday's tanker seizure would be "considered but robust", and it would ensure the safety of its shipping.

He accused Iran of a tit-for-tat response after the seizure of Iran's Grace 1 tanker in the British territory of Gibraltar at the mouth of the Mediterranean on July 4.

"Yesterday's (Friday) action in Gulf shows worrying signs Iran may be choosing a dangerous path of illegal and destabilising behaviour after Gibraltar's legal detention of oil bound for Syria," Hunt said on Twitter yesterday.

On Friday, Hunt said the solution would be found via diplomacy and London was "not looking at military options." Britain's government said it had advised British shipping to stay out of the Hormuz area for an interim period.

The past three months of escalation have seen the United States and Iran come as close as ever to direct military confrontation. In June, Tehran shot down a US drone, and Trump ordered retaliatory air strikes, only to call them off just minutes before impact.

Since British Royal Marines abseiled from a helicopter to seize the Iranian tanker on July 4, a number of Iranian officials had threatened to retaliate.

A senior politician and Revolutionary Guards commander, Major General Mohsen Rezaei, said on Twitter that Iran was also not looking for war, "but we are not going to come up short in reciprocating".

In New Delhi, India's foreign ministry said it was actively seeking the release of its nationals among the crew.

Operator Stena Bulk said on Friday the tanker had been "in full compliance with all navigation and international regulations", but could not be contacted. It had no further comment early on Saturday.

The vessel had been heading to a port in Saudi Arabia and suddenly changed course after passing through the strait.

The United States has blamed Iran for a series of attacks on shipping around the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran rejects the allegations. Washington also said it had this week downed an Iranian drone near where the Stena Impero was seized.

The United States is sending military personnel and resources to Saudi Arabia for the first time since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Manila asks Iran to free Filipino on seized British-flagged tanker

AFP, Manila

The Philippines yesterday said it would ask Iran to free a Filipino crew member of a British-flagged tanker seized by Tehran's Revolutionary Guards.

The Swedish-owned Stena Impero was seized in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday for colliding with a fishing boat, Iranian authorities said, as tensions mount in a key waterway for the world's oil supplies.

The Philippine foreign department said one of the ship's crew is a Filipino citizen, and that the others were 18 Indians, three Russians and a Latvian.

The agency that supplied the Filipino crew member told Manila there were no reported injuries as the vessel headed for the Iranian coast on Friday, the department said in a statement.

"(Philippine) Ambassador to Iran Fred Santos is contacting Iranian authorities to seek assurance that the Filipino seafarer is safe and will be released soon," it said, adding the unidentified crew member's family has been notified.

Iranian authorities said the tanker has anchored off the port of Bandar Abbas with all its 23 crew aboard.

Britain said a second ship had also been seized in the Persian Gulf -- the Liberian-flagged Mesdar.

The Mesdar's British owner said its ship had been temporarily boarded by armed personnel, but was free to leave and that all crew were "safe and well".

Tensions in the Gulf have soared in recent weeks, with US President Donald Trump in June calling off air strikes against Iran at the last minute after Tehran downed a US drone, and blaming Iran for a series of tanker attacks.

Washington has been ratcheting up sanctions against Tehran after the US unilaterally withdrew from a 2015 deal under which Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear development activities in return for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions.

Fake millers selling rice to govt

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 "I'm farming papaya on the land cited as the location of my rice mill," said Belal Hossain of Gendutari village of the sadar upazila, a listed miller.

He sold 22 tonnes of rice to the government.

So did Uzzal Hossain, who owns four mills in the same village which exist in paper only. He sold 27 tonnes. When asked, Uzzal proudly said, "It doesn't matter how I got enlisted."

Visiting across the sadar upazila, this reporter looked out for Abdullah Enterprise and Mohana Enterprise at Mogholhat village, Azizul Mill at Kulaghat, Talha Enterprise at Durakuti, Nayeem Enterprise at Burirbazar, Janata Husking Mill at Bhatibari, Hridi Rice Mill at Nayarhat, and Bhai Husking Mill and Moni Husking Mill at Mahendranagar. But he could find none of them.

This reporter also visited at least

45 rice mills in four other upazilas -- Aditmari, Kaliganj, Hatibandha and Patgram -- and found 17 fake rice mills and 10 non-operational ones, which closed down two to three years ago.

Nazir Ali, 56, a resident of Gotamari village in Hatibandha upazila, said there is no mill in the village but some chatals or concrete surfaces are there for drying paddy.

Still, Almaha Rice Mill is enlisted. When contacted, its owner Syed Ali suggested that this correspondent communicate with the food officer concerned for details about the mill.

Talking to The Daily Star, authentic millers blamed "a nexus between unscrupulous food officials and fake rice mill owners" for the evil practice.

They protested the irregularities by confining Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Food Controller (UFC) Ayub Ali to the district food office for three hours

on May 19. The millers alleged that the UFC enlisted non-existent rice mills in exchange for bribes.

One of the millers said Ayub Ali took Tk 40,000-60,000 from each fake miller. He refused to be quoted fearing that his allotment might get cancelled.

Belal Hossain, who is listed but has no mill, also acknowledged it, saying "irregularities and corruption are common in the food office."

Following allegations, the district food controller office has formed a five-member committee to verify their physical status, infrastructure and necessary documents of 17 rice mills in the sadar upazila. An office order was issued regarding this on May 15.

Contacted, UFC Ayub Ali flatly denied the allegations. He said he enlisted mills following the clearance certificates of the Department of Environment (DoE). But he remained

silent when asked if he had visited the mills, which are said to be fake.

According to rules, mill owners have to apply for enlistment, and the UFC concerned is supposed to visit the locations to verify that the mills have proper infrastructure, a functioning milling machine, and papers including environment certificates.

Hatibandha Upazila Food Controller (additional charge) Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, who was made head of the five-member committee to check on the 17 rice mills, said, "I will visit all mills to verify their existence soon."

District Controller of Food in Lalmonirhat (additional charge) Kazi Saifuddin said an investigation was going on against non-existent mills, and action would be taken as per rules. "Food officials found guilty of enlisting fake mills will face departmental action."

Raushan

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 senior leaders, including Raushan, remaining absent from Quader's programmes.

Raushan, Anisul Islam Mahmud, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, Mujibul Haque Chunnun and Fakhru Imam, distanced themselves from Quader ever since he was made the acting chairman of the party in late February by HM Ershad.

According to party sources, the senior leaders opposed Quader taking the party helm in Ershad's absence and backed Raushan for the chairman post instead.

Ershad's death threw the party into a leadership crisis and created a scope for fostering divisions over the chairman post.

A JP presidium member yesterday told this correspondent that getting Raushan's support meant the rift over chairmanship might cease for now.

"But the party might face crisis if the rift among the senior leaders intensifies in the days to come," the leader said wishing anonymity.

At a press conference in the Banani office of the JP chairman in the city yesterday, Quader, however, claimed there was no rift in the party as "99 percent" of the presidium members were taking part in its organisational activities.

"Jatiya Party is implementing its political programme unitedly. Joint leadership of the party has made the organisation more organised and stronger. There is no division and disorder in the party at present," GM Quader said.

Since its inception in 1986, there had been no other contender to challenge Ershad for the chairman post.

JP sources said some senior party leaders were backing Raushan for the post because it would be easy for them to get benefits if she led the party instead of Quader.

"That's why those senior leaders remained unhappy with Ershad's decision to make Quader the party's acting chief," said another JP central leader.

Amid opposition from some JP senior leaders, Ershad on March 22 removed Quader from the post of acting chairman.

He also relieved Quader of the co-chairman post, saying his brother had failed to discharge his duties and created divisions within the party.

Ershad also removed Quader from the post of deputy leader of the opposition.

But around two weeks later, Ershad, known for his political summersaults, reinstated Quader to the post of co-chairman and then again acting chairman of the party.

Quader was formally unveiled as the party's chairman on July 18, amid an absence of a section of JP senior leaders.

10 to 15 AL

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 allegations against 15 men from one political party and 12 men from another.

Moreover, the ACC has been either inquiring or investigating allegations against 25 people involved in business and some 15 bureaucrats -- from the secretary to the joint secretary levels, he said.

He said the commission lacks capability and also has legal limitations. He stressed on the change needed in people's mindsets to fight against corruption.

On his remarks at the recent DC conference about how activities done in "good faith while discharging duties were not crimes" in line with the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), he said he did not speak about corruption in his remarks.

"How 'corruption' came in I have no idea," he added.

The comments he made during recent DC conference stirred controversy on social media and in the mainstream media.

At the seminar, HRPB President Advocate Manzil Murshid said the ACC has the opportunity to play a strong role in curbing corruption.

"The question is whether it will use such an opportunity."

Eminent jurist Barrister M Amir-ul Islam said corruption and degradation have plagued the society like a "great flood".

"A great flood of corruption has begun. We have to stop this flood..." he said.

He added that graft cannot be eradicated with enforcing laws or awarding jail sentences alone, but implanting values and ethics in children from schools must be done to achieve such a goal, he added.

Man killed

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 General Hospital morgue for autopsy, and then handed it over to family members.

Police claimed to have recovered a pistol, three bullets and 380 yaba pills from the spot.

Seeking anonymity, one of Rafiqul's relatives, said he was not involved in drug dealing.

Asked, Nasir Uddin said, "If he was not involved in drug dealing, how did we have six cases filed against him?"

"Rafiqul even married a girl in Teknaf to make his business a success," he said.

However Begum's lack of remorse has turned public opinion against her, and the British government stripped her of her citizenship in February.

Kurdish-run camps in northeast Syria have taken in some 12,000 foreign fighters from 40 different countries, including 4,000 women and 8,000 children whose fathers are jihadists.

Countries with jihadists stranded in refugee camps "are responsible for these individuals," said Joya. "We can't just push them off to the Middle East, to the Kurdish people... the abuses they're facing in these camps are only confirming their beliefs of radicalization."

Joya is participating in the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) program organized by the Clarion Program, a US non-profit dedicated to educating people "about the growing phenomenon of Islamic extremism," according to its website.

of the group's English-language propaganda, and Joya said he became the "highest-ranking American" in the IS group.

He died in 2017 during fighting in Mayadin, in northern Syria, as the so-called IS "caliphate" crumbled.

However this created a new problem -- Western jihadists or their spouses and children wanting to come home.

Joya realized that she had something to offer. "It's really important to de-radicalize them, rehabilitate" these people, she said.

"It's reprogramming them and giving them a sense of hope in the political process."

It's also important to "get them to understand the psychology and the patterns... what led them to extremism," understanding "the rejection many in the US and Europe faced growing up there, the cultural conflict, the crisis they went through," she said.

"Once it's all explained to them, very logically, they will accept it just as I did."

Joya favors repatriating foreign rebels from the Middle East so they can be judged in their countries of origin.

While that is the US policy, many European countries such as France are wary of taking in the jihadists.

In May and June, 11 French nationals were sentenced to die in Iraq for their affiliation to IS.

Joya has campaigned for the return of Shamima Begum, who joined the jihadist group when she was just 15 but now wants to return home to Britain.