

Lime-fortified rice reduces calcium deficiency

Finds icddr,b study
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Oyster shell grind -- a source of slaked lime or calcium hydroxide -- can help reduce calcium deficiency greatly, finds an icddr,b study.

The findings were revealed in an event titled "Tackling Calcium Deficiency in the Diet: Learning from the People", organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) on Sunday.

icddr,b scientists conducted the study on 22 women in Dhaka -- all of whom were 18-49 years old, non-pregnant,

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Standing in the scorching Dhaka heat and covering their heads with newspapers, people wait in front of a TCB truck to purchase daily essentials at a subsidised rate. With the price of commodities on the rise, many in the capital now solely depend on getting items from these trucks. This photo was taken on Mirpur road in Dhanmondi yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Expanding beyond the horizon

Brac holds press meet marking its 50th anniversary
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"We started Brac Schools when the country needed education and there was a very little scope for poor children to get educated.

We closed it down, as we feel that we need to focus on other issues," said Asif Saleh, executive director of Brac Bangladesh, at a press meet held at the capital's Brac Centre, marking its 50th founding anniversary yesterday.

Mentioning that Brac once ran around 64,000 schools across the

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TikTok: preferred app for youth crime?

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Though a relatively new social media platform, TikTok has already become a preferred tool for criminals to carry out their activities, according to law enforcers.

The shocking picture came to the fore after they arrested around 28 people since May last year.

TikTok app activities are also leading to deadly clashes among its users. In a recent debacle, a mere "haha" reaction on a TikTok video posted on Facebook led to a clash in Gazipur, leaving at least three dead and four injured.

Legal experts and law enforcers believe that the issue can be addressed by raising awareness and bringing such social media

apps under strict monitoring.

RAPE, EXTORTION

During investigations, law enforcers discovered a syndicate that targets teenage or school-going girls on TikTok and befriends them. They're then lured in with promises of TikTok stardom and invited to meet-ups. Once they agree and come over, they're sexually harassed and even raped, while on record. The videos are then used to extort them.

In the first week of February, DB's cyber and special crime division arrested two -- DJ Nayem (20) and Kamal Ali (19), after the father of a 14-year-old girl filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station under the pornography control act.

The victim's father claimed that he



received some compromising photos of the girl on WhatsApp on January 31. The sender demanded a motorbike, threatening to post the photos on social media otherwise. Detectives recovered around 60 more teenage girls' photographs from the arrestees' cell phones after the arrest.

"We're looking for another member of the syndicate, who used to rape teenagers after inviting them to shoot videos and later extort them with video recordings of the crime," said Junaed Alam Sharkar, DB's additional deputy commissioner.

In September last year, police arrested Rasul Hridhoy from the capital's Bhatara on the charge of raping four girls. Police said he used to trap girls by using similar tactics.

FROM BURGLARY TO COLLECT MONEY

On February 2, DB (Gulshan Division) arrested four -- Hazrat Ali (25), Shimul

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Govt must rein in prices of essentials: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that government machinery must be active throughout the year to control prices of daily essentials and appropriate legal action has to be taken against unscrupulous traders responsible for hoarding goods.

If the government machinery worked regularly and actively, syndicates would not dare to hoard essentials for extra profit, causing people to suffer, said the HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice SM Moniruzzaman.

The bench made the comment while hearing a petition filed to seek HC directive on the government to set up a monitoring cell and control prices of daily essentials.

The HC said the Competition Act, 2012 has been formulated to stop monopoly. There are necessary laws, organisations and agencies to control the prices of daily commodities.

However, the law is not being enforced properly.

Monitoring and controlling market prices of essentials are a regular duty of the authorities concerned under the relevant laws, said the court.

Demolish 130 illegal brick kilns in CHT: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to demolish all 130 illegal brick kilns in Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati, to curb environment pollution.

It also asked authorities to submit compliance reports before it in six weeks.

The court also ordered deputy commissioners of the three Chattogram Hill Tract (CHT) districts to take appropriate action, which includes filing cases against owners of the brick kilns in three days, after receiving the order.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and

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PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 15



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-00	12-45	4-30	6-14	7-45
Jamaat	5-35	1-15	4-45	6-18	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

BR's struggle continues

ADB uninterested in financing railway's procurement of 70 locomotives

Govt took project in Aug 2011

Hyundai Rotem Company was selected in May 2018

Project deadline extended twice: June 2018, June 2019

Project revised in Oct 2018, taking costs to Tk 2,659.33cr

New deadline: June 2024

Project got stalled, as loan agreement could not be signed

- Finance Division said soft loans should be managed
- Hyundai declined to manage soft loans
- BR told ADB to give \$111 million that was unused in 2 ADB-funded projects
- ADB said it's not interested

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The crisis over a Bangladesh Railway (BR) project to procure 70 metre-gauge (MG) locomotives is refusing to go away.

Taken in August 2011, the project faced different difficulties -- from issues relating to the tendering process to problems with funding -- over the years.

When South Korean Hyundai Rotem Company (HRC) was finally selected for the project in October 2018, costs rose to Tk 2,659.33 crore from the original Tk 1,946 crore.

But, three years into the contract, HRC in December last year said it wants to pull out from the project, after the government asked it to manage soft loans instead of non-concessional ones, as agreed by both sides earlier.

It is worth noting that the authorities have already spent Tk 5.22 crore on the project till now. When the project's fate was hanging in the balance, BR took a fresh move to manage funds. The state-run transport agency has requested Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide \$111 million, which BR saved from two ADB-funded projects, to the ailing one.

However, while holding a meeting with BR high-ups in Dhaka yesterday, an ADB delegation -- led by Ravi Peri, director of ADB's transport and communications division, South Asia Department -- said it is not interested in financing the project.

In this situation, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) and Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU), whose suggestion was sought by BR, may recommend cancelling the project or completing it with government funds, albeit by curtailing the number of locomotives to be procured.

PROBLEMS EVER-PRESENT

In August 2011, the government took up the project to procure locomotives to mitigate the growing crisis of rail engines and expand BR's services.

However, BR is still facing the crisis, as 82 percent of the 171 MG locomotives and 55 percent of 92 broad-gauge (BG) locomotives are past their 20-year economic lifespan.

The new locomotives were supposed to be added to

the BR fleet within June 2017, but project authorities could not even complete the bidding process by that time. The first two tenders got no response. The third tender invitation was published on December 22, 2014. Among five bidders, a Spanish company and Hyundai Rotem were found responsive.

The Spanish company was not selected, however, because it changed its registered name. Later, Hyundai's proposal was accepted on May 16, 2018.

In the meantime, the project deadline was extended twice -- once till June 2018 and then till June 2019. The project cost remained the same. In October 2018, the project was revised, taking costs to Tk 2,659.33 crore, and a fresh deadline was set: June 2024.

In the same month, BR signed a deal with Hyundai for procurement. As per the agreement, Hyundai was supposed to arrange the required funds.

In February, 2020, the standing committee on non-concessional loan approved the Tk 1,946-crore fund. The railway ministry was supposed to get \$280 million in non-concessional loans from two foreign banks.

The project, however, got stalled since the loan agreement could not be signed. After the project authorities sought opinions from Economic Relations Division on the draft loan agreement, ERD in August last year forwarded the Finance Division's opinion on the matter.

Finance Division opined that soft loans from South Korea or other sources should be managed, instead of taking non-concessional loans, which come with higher interest rates.

When the project authorities asked Hyundai to manage the soft loans, it declined, stating that it would cancel the contract.

On January 4 this year, the project implementation committee decided to take opinions from IMED and CPTU in this regard. However, the two bodies are yet to give their decision, said a BR official.

BR PROPOSAL GARNERS NO INTEREST

In this situation, BR told the ADB delegation that \$111 million remained unused in two ADB-funded projects -- Akhaura-Laksam Double Line Project and Railway Rolling Stock Operations Improvement Project.

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