

Bumper Boro yield expected in Mymensingh, Moulvibazar districts

Reaping starts, may take 2-3 weeks to complete harvest

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Bumper production of Boro paddy is expected in Mymensingh and Moulvibazar districts in this season as much larger areas came under cultivation and weather was favourable, said officials of Agriculture Extension Department (AED).

According to DAE sources, the farmers here cultivated more lands for Boro this season to make up the losses of Aman crops due to last year's repeated floods.

According to AED sources, some 2,60,720 hectares of land have been brought under Boro cultivation in 12 upazilas of Mymensingh district against the target of 221,150 hectares, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

AED officials, who earlier fixed a production target of 8,65,760 tonnes this season, now are expecting 1,31,956 tonnes of additional Boro paddy.

Hybrid variety of Boro was cultivated on some 45,880 hectares of land which was 5000 hectares in last year's Boro season, said an AED official.

High yielding hybrid variety of Boro is gaining popularity as hybrid Boro paddy yields 4.7 tonnes per hectare on an average and it is one tonne more than other high yielding varieties.

"We supported the farmers with latest agriculture technology and provided hybrid seeds to achieve a bumper Boro yield this season," DAE Deputy Director Maqbul Hossain Talukder said.

He also expressed hope that papadara disease (bacterial leaf streak) will not have any serious effect on Boro production in the district.

Mymensingh Deputy



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers reaping Boro paddy at a profusely yielding field in Hakaluki Haor in Kulaura upazila in Moulvibazar district.

Commissioner Md Shamsul Alam formally inaugurated the harvesting of Boro at Sattrashiya in Muktagachha upazila on Sunday.

Our Moulvibazar Correspondent adds:

Farmers in Moulvibazar district have started harvesting Boro paddy while Agriculture Extension Department (AED) officials said they are expecting 53 thousand tonnes of additional paddy in the district compared to the last Boro season.

During a recent visit of Kawadighi Haor, Hakaluki Haor and Hail Haor, the main Boro producing areas of Moulvibazar district, this correspondent saw farmers engaged in harvesting paddy.

According to Moulvibazar DAE office, one lakh 31 thousand 33 acres of land in Moulvibazar district was brought under Boro cultivation this year. In the previous year, land under Boro farming was one lakh 1 thousand 270 acres.

The DAE source said, according to their calculation, they are expecting that one lakh 93 thousand metric tonnes of rice (from Boro paddy) will be produced this year, which is 53 thousand metric tonnes more than that of last year. Last year production quantity of rice in the district was one lakh 40 thousand metric tonnes.

Moulvibazar DAE Deputy Director Laxmi Kanta Pandit said the district sees a good produc-

tion of Boro and about 10 to 12 per cent of the paddy has already been harvested as BRI-28, BRI-25, and BRI-15 varieties have matured.

BRI-29 variety, which comprises most of the cultivated paddy, will be matured within seven to eight days, the DAE official said.

There was no natural disaster during this Boro season, he said.

Several farmers told this correspondent that they will be able to complete harvesting smoothly if favourable weather continues for two weeks.

DAE officials said farmers are now safe as time of hailstorm is over.

Tk 1 crore stolen electric wire seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized stolen electric wire worth over Tk 1 crore from an illegal factory and held ten factory workers in the port city yesterday.

Acting on a tip, a Rab team raided Sabir Metal Works in Kalurghat BSCIC Industrial area at around 3:00pm, sources said.

They seized huge quantity of stolen electric wire from the factory that was running illegally to produce metal pans and blocks by melting the wire of Power Development Board (PDB).

Members of the elite force held ten workers from the factory and were interrogating them during filing of this report.

The seized wire might be stolen from different areas, as the held persons could not provide any documents regarding the wire, ASP Sharif, staff officer of Rab-7, said, adding that approximate price of the seized wire would be over Tk 1 crore.

Unique scheme to help the poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Family of a Dubai expatriate has taken initiative to help the poor people of his area by selling rice at Tk 20.

Every day, about 250 people are benefiting from the initiative taken by Dubai expatriate Md Abdul Quddus and his brothers of Sujanager village under Baralekha upazila in Moulvibazar district.

Under the programme started on April 1, purchasers of 5 kg of rice at a time are getting 2 kg potato free of cost.

Abdul Quddus said his family have allocated Tk 10 lakh as they have to buy rice at Tk 33 per kg from the market.

The unique example of social work should inspire solvent people of our society, Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Alkama Siddiquee said.

Potato rots in Chandpur cold storages as overloading raises temperature

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A huge amount of potato is rotting at several cold storages in Chandpur Sadar, Matlab, Hajiganj, and Kochua upazilas, said affected potato growers, traders and middlemen.

About 1,500 potato growers, traders and middlemen who stored their potatoes at Patwary Cold Storage, the largest one in the district, are in great despair as good amount the potatoes kept there have rotted.

Asked about the matter, cold storage manager Kader Master said the situation has arisen due to overloading of potatoes.

"Due to over-storage, required temperature cannot be maintained and potatoes are rot-

ting," Agriculture Extension Department Deputy Director Abdur Rashid said.

Two days ago, staffs of Patwary Cold Storage were seen dumping the rotten potatoes into nearby holes, spreading bad smell in the neighbouring areas. Hearing the news of potatoes getting rotten many potato growers and traders are rushing to Patwary Cold Storage to know the fate of their stored potatoes.

A few potato growers were seen selling their bad quality potatoes at Tk 100/- per sack (containing around 85 kg of potato).

Farmer Md Ismail Gazi of Bora Eacholy said he had to sell half rotten potatoes at Tk 7 thousand whereas the usual price would be

Tk 7 lakh.

Shahjahan Bhuiyan a trader has said about 1500 sacks of potatoes that he kept in the cold storage have gone rotten.

Farmer Dulal Bhuiyan said his 60 sacks of potatoes have already rotted.

Another farmer and trader Ratan has said, he does not know about the fate and condition of his stored 300 sacks of potatoes.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation Manager (Seed Preservation and Cold store) Ashraf Mollah said following bumper production of potatoes in Chandpur district this year, cold storages received potatoes much more than their usual capacity and it has led to rotting of the vegetable.



PHOTO: STAR

Workers busy separating good potatoes from the rotten ones at Patwary Cold Storage on Ichali Road at Chandpur.

2nd charge sheet submitted against ex-chief whip Hasanat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal police has submitted charge sheets in two criminal cases lodged against former chief whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah for the second time.

Rafikul Islam, officer-in-charge of Barisal Kotwali Model Police Station submitted the charge sheets with Barisal Divisional Special Judge's Court on Tuesday night.

Taking cognisance of the both cases, Judge KM Zulfikar Ali yesterday issued summon against Hasanat to appear before the court and ordered fixing dates for charge framing to start the trials.

Court sources said the two cases were lodged against Hasanat about recovery of 355 blank certificates of freedom fighters and Tk 6,13,275 in cash, some gold ornaments and valuable prizes by the joint forces during Operation Clean Heart on October 22, 2002.

Inspector Nilotpal Dey of Barisal Detective Branch of police submitted charge sheet in a case on August 31, 2004 and Inspector Zillur Rahman, former officer in charge of that police station and investigation officer of another cases, submitted charge sheet against Hasanat on April 13, 2006.

In the mean time, the High Court granted Hasanat ad interim bail until submission of charge sheet.

Hasanat was declared as absconding after he failed to surrender before the law.

Two days before imposing state of emergency in the country on January 11, 2007, Hasanat went to India and started living there with his daughter and Indian daughter in law.

Both of the cases were sent for trial to Barisal Divisional Special Tribunal and following court instruction, the Anti-Corruption Commission ordered police to reinvestigate the cases and again submit charge sheets on November 22, 2007.

Later the trial court issued notices against police for their failure to follow the instruction of ACC on March 2008 and ordered to submit charge sheets of the cases immediately.

Then Inspector Rafikul Islam, reinvestigating the cases again prepared charge sheets against Hasanat on April 02, 2008 and submitted those before the court on last Tuesday.

Khepupara Radar Station opens today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The operation of a new radar station at Khepupara in Patuakhali is beginning today to monitor tropical cyclones generated in the Bay of Bengal and strengthen the early warning system to reduce casualties by natural disasters.

Khepupara Radar Station will be inaugurated in a ceremony at 11:00am at Khepupara where Defence Ministry Secretary Kamrul Hasan is scheduled to be present as the chief guest. Japanese

Ambassador to Dhaka Masayuki Inoue and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Additional Resident Representative Eiichiro Cho as special guests.

The radar station has been installed under phase two of Improvement of Meteorological Radar System at Cox's Bazar and Khepupara project with assistance from Japan's Grant Aid, says a press release.

Two radars one located at Cox's Bazaar and the other at Khepupara were earlier installed in 1988 under

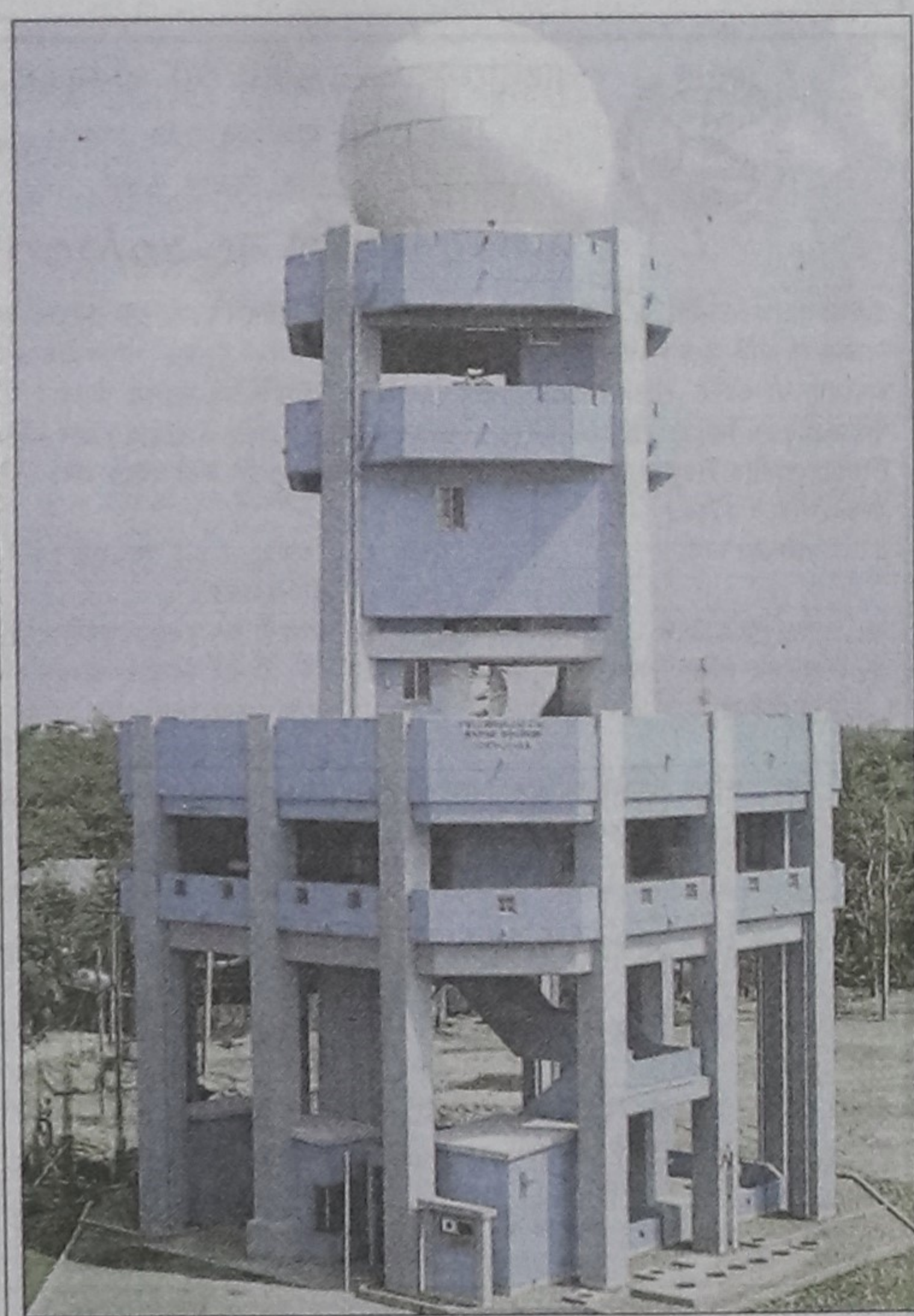


PHOTO: STAR

Newly constructed Khepupara Radar Station

the assistance of Japan's Grant Aid with two modern S-band meteorological radars.

In 1994, these radars were connected with the Storm Warning Centre in Dhaka with Microwave Link to receive radar images directly from Cox's Bazaar and Khepupara.

But with the expiry of normal lifetime of the radars, it became necessary to replace them and following request from

Bangladesh, JICA completed construction of both radars.

Both the radars are expected to contribute to the reduction of devastations and casualties caused by tropical cyclones and other natural disasters.

With assistance from Japan, four radars have been installed in Dhaka, Rangpur, Cox's Bazaar and Khepupara while another one is under construction in Moulvibazar.

Upazila polls before parliamentary ones

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holding the upazila elections much earlier, sources in the government said.

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal at a recent meeting with the EC proposed the latter to begin holding the polls to 482 upazila parishes, wherever voter lists are ready.

Voter lists for at least 100 upazilas are expected to be ready within May, and if the EC, now re-empowered with the authority to announce upazila election schedules, wants to start holding the elections in phases either in August or in September, it has all legal powers to do so.

Voter lists for other upazilas will also be ready by that time as the entire job of preparing the national voter list is scheduled to be completed by the end of October, officials in the EC Secretariat said.

During electoral reform dialogues between the EC and political parties and during the latter's 'unof-

ficial' talks with government advisers, most of the participating political parties opposed the plan of holding upazila elections before the parliamentary polls.

Referring to previous instances they alleged, former military rulers held local government polls first to consolidate their power at grassroots level to ensure easy victories in parliamentary polls. Besides, preparations for the parliamentary poll will be hampered if the upazila elections are held first, the political parties argued.

With reported blessings from the military backed caretaker administration, union parishad chairmen have been campaigning for holding upazila elections before the parliamentary poll. A forum of the union parishad chairmen held at least eight meetings countrywide to drum up public support for early upazila polls, which had last been held in 1990.

This month they also met the CEC and the caretaker government's five dialoguing advisers, demanding upazila elections before the parliamentary polls.

"The advisers assured us of upazila elections before the parliamentary poll," a union parishad chairman told The Daily Star yesterday on condition of anonymity.

CEC Huda earlier on several occasions said the EC had decided to hold upazila elections and it was examining whether the polls would be held before or simultaneously with the parliamentary poll.

The poll chief yesterday however buried all speculations by disclosing the EC's plan to hold the upazila polls before the parliamentary election.

The CEC told the Gono Forum delegation that the field level work of voter registration will be completed by the end of June or by the first week of July.

CEC Huda however said the polls to four city corporations and seven municipalities will not be held in May according to the earlier announced timeframe, due to a delay in promulgating fresh laws regarding those polls.

On the state of emergency, the CEC said the EC already asked the government to create an environment conducive to holding polls, either by lifting or by relaxing the state of emergency.

About remapping parliamentary constituencies, the CEC said the commission will publish a draft of redrawn parliamentary boundaries on Sunday.

"Claims and objections over the redrawn parliamentary constituencies will be settled before May 17," Huda said last afternoon.

Earlier in the day, Huda's house in Faridpur district town came under attack reportedly from activists of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP

protesting the EC's decision to invite their rival faction to an electoral reform dialogue, leaving the loyalists of detained BNP chairperson unsure about their electoral future.

Asked for his comment about the incident, the CEC told reporters that he knew nothing about it.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain at the meeting with the EC lauded the commission's electoral reform proposals. "It depends on the Election Commission whether democracy will be restored in the country. An election acceptable to all is our main demand," Dr Kamal said.

In response to a Gono Forum proposal, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) MSakawat Hussain said the drive for recovering small arms and arresting local goons may continue until the parliamentary election is about to be held.

Arms, drugs, fake notes seized

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized firearms, bullets, heroin, Indian phensidyl, marijuana and fake currency notes and arrested nine people including arms traders and drug peddlers from different areas in Rajshahi region yesterday and Tuesday.

Rab yesterday seized one Italy-made pistol, four bullets and a sharp weapon from Mallikhati in Natore district and arrested two persons in this connection, say a Rab press release.

Another Rab team seized 260 gram heroin worth about Tk 13,700 from Mohisbatan village of Rajshahi and arrested three persons.

Another Rab team seized seven fake 500-taka notes and 53 fake 100-taka notes from Sundarban Courier Service office at Tulshighat in Gaibandha district and arrested one person.

Rajshahi Rab seized 93 bottles of Indian Phensidyl from Chakmuktarpur under Charghat upazila in Rajshahi and arrested one person yesterday.

Joypurhat Rab seized 58 bottles of Indian Phensidyl from Hili under the district.

Rab seized 67 bottles of Indian phensidyl during a raid at Kholabona village under Paba upazila of Rajshahi district and arrested two persons.

Rangpur Rab seized nine kg marijuana from Modern Crossing area and arrested a person on Tuesday.

The arrested people and seized items were handed over to police.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Zafong with its hills, rivers, flora and fauna is a great attraction for tourists and nature loving-people but large-scale extraction of stones from there may prove fatal to its environment in the long run.