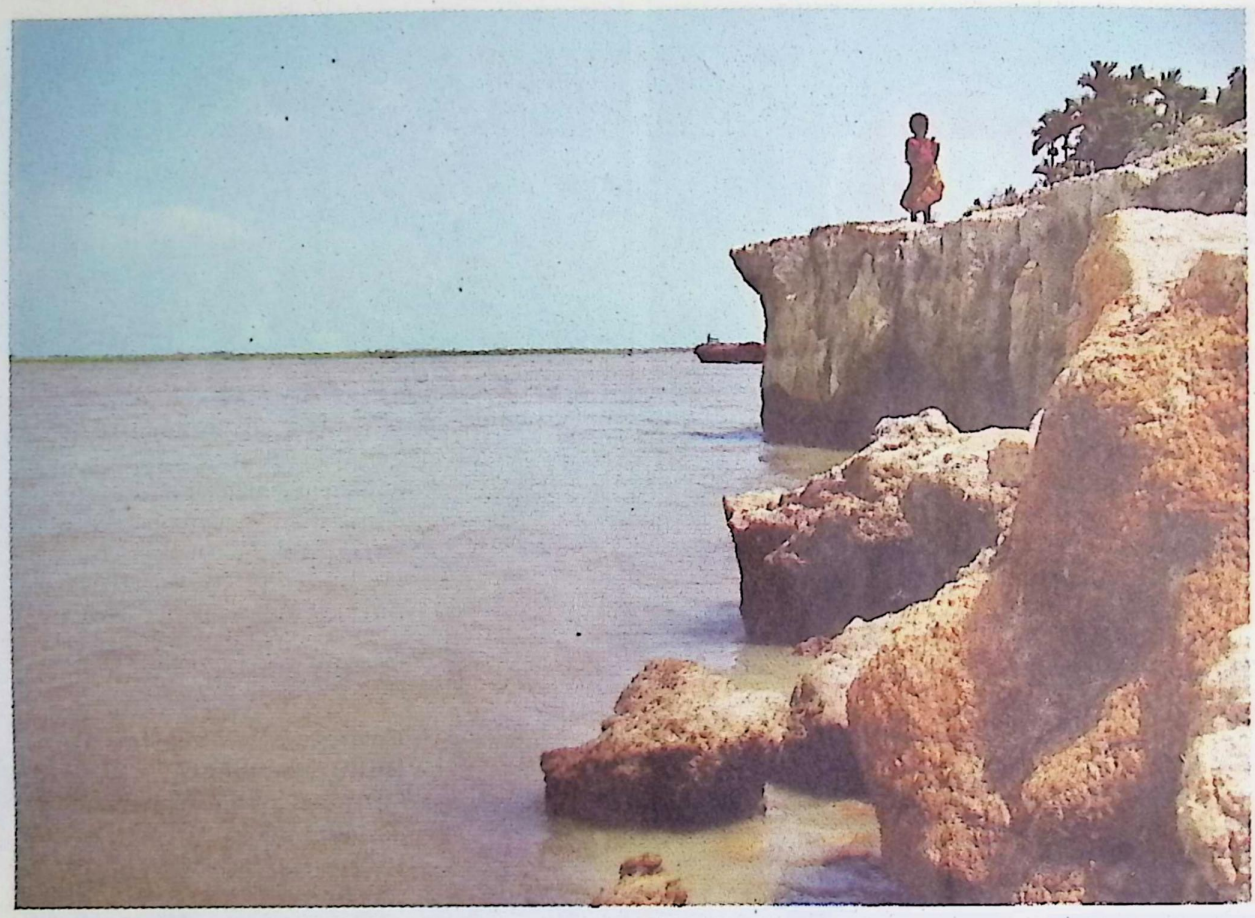


QUDDUS ALAM/DRIKNEWS

Rivers have a dynamic force of their own, and only collaborative efforts, involving people living along the rivers ... need to be engaged simultaneously.

agricultural and habitable lands.

Bangladesh is very likely to see more frequent and heavier rainfall that would result in more severe flooding and increased land erosion. Flooding in the future is also likely to be more frequent and of longer duration, resulting in substantial crop damage and losses.

Larger Regional Food Issues

According to some calculations, a 2°C increase in mean air temperature could decrease rain-fed rice yields by 5-12% in China. In one scenario, net cereal production in South Asian countries is projected to decline by 4-10% by the end of this century. In Bangladesh, production of rice may fall by just under ten per cent and wheat by a third by the year 2050.

Rising Sea Levels and Vanishing Islands

Sea levels are also rising in the subregion. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

"Projected sea level rise could flood the residence of millions of people living in the low lying areas of South, Southeast and East Asia such as in Vietnam, Bangladesh, India and China."

If the Bay of Bengal were to rise by three feet by the turn of the century, it would swallow a fifth of Bangladesh. In all, a dozen islands, home to 70,000 people, are in danger of being submerged by the rising seas.

These Problems Cannot be Ignored or Solved Alone

So far, approaches to solution have been reactive, piecemeal and more mechanistic than dynamic. Entrenched mindsets of "bilateralism" have tended to inculcate an "escapist" syndrome.

It appears that Bangladesh would rather operate in the comfort zone of Bimst-EC, dealing largely with trade issues, rather than look SAGQ in the eye and seek solutions to a set of intertwined and much larger, but potentially far more consequential, issues. Of these, the rivers that form the complex arte-