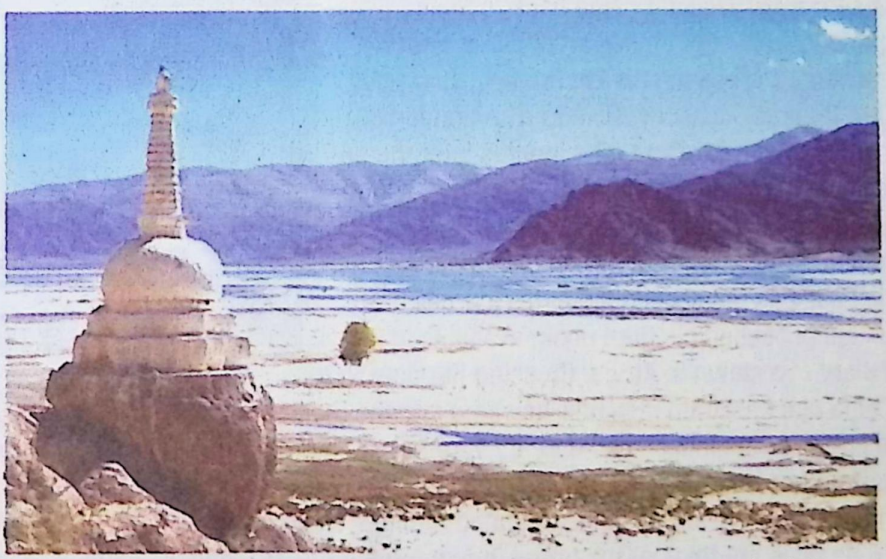
treaties on water-sharing have been signed and in the last few decades 37 cross-border disputes over water has lead to some form of violence. While there are some treaties that have worked reasonably well many remain futile especially those that are concentrated in Africa where nearly a quarter of the world's cross-border river basins exist. But one of the major boiling points over this issue is in the Middle East and in this World Water Forum meeting, Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas accused Israel of violating International Laws over the latter's policy of drawing water from Jordan River and coastal aquifers which is causing Palestinians to have four times less water per capita than the Israelis, a consumption level that falls below the World Health Organization's guideline for minimum daily access to water.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, the risk factor associated with water availability is one of ominous significance. Despite being a riverine country, 57 trans-boundary rivers of this country originate from different points in India while the rest are from Myanmar. Bangladesh already suffers a great deal of water related problems like arsenic poisoning (61 out of 64 districts are now affected), flooding, drought and river bank erosion most of which is due to man-made intervention like that of Farakka Dam along with constantly suffering from the effects of unequal distribution of Ganges's water which breaches the water distribution accord that was made with India in 1975. The delegates from Bangladesh in the recent WWF meeting in Istanbul earnestly addressed many of these issues. But the greatest threat lies on India's ambition to construct the River Linking Project (RLP) which plans to interlink Himalayan Rivers and divert their flows to the western and southern states of India which experts believe that in effect will put Bangladesh into the brink of serious environmental, economical and social disaster by drastically decreasing the water flow of sub-rivers of the country's north-western regions, north-central regions, south-western regions and south-central regions. Dhaka also has its fair share of the sufferings, the testimony of which could be given by almost each of its residents. Against the demand of 1.6 billion litres per day, WASA currently has the capacity of supplying 1.27 billion litres of water for the residents of the capital and as the ground water levels are falling by nearly six feet each year, many of the 750 deep tube-wells of WASA will eventually be unable to pump out water as they won't be able to reach to the deepening underwater reservoirs. This is bad news for the city's 12.3 million residents. Add to that is the growing threat from the impact of the climate change and rise in the sea levels which many fear would have disastrous effect on Bangladesh. Interestingly, the issue of water wasn't included directly in Kyoto Protocol, the key international agreement on tackling climate change, however even though it's been long overdue, the follow-up accord which is scheduled to take place at the end of 2009 in Copenhagen promises to put worthy emphasis on this vital matter that single-handedly determines the overall well-being of mankind.



The future for many maybe drying up.

In 2006, a UNESCO report said that global water crisis is largely a crisis of water governance where mismanagement, corruption, inefficient personnel and inadequate infrastructure and bureaucratic sluggishness are the chief reasons behind the planet's growing water crisis. Many fear these crises are artificially created so that the influential could control who gets the right to have what amount of water, when and how and other related services. It might seem like a conspiracy theory but if wars could be waged over the control of oil, an energy source that has many alternatives and was found only yesterday compared to mankind's era of existence, then it might not be any exaggeration that large scale military conflicts are just waiting to occur over water which has absolutely no substitute and is crucial for everyday existence. Some have even gone further to the extent by saying that the third world war would be fought over the control of water! Inevitability or paranoia, only time will tell. But what we do know is that multinational private water management companies are now estimated to be a $200 billion business which runs the water systems for the 7% of the world's population. By 2015 this could grow to 17% and worth $1 trillion by 2021. In May, 2000, Fortune magazine predicted that water is going to become "one of the world's great business opportunities" and "it promises to be to the 21st century what oil was to the 20th".