



## Sunderbans is shrinking fast

**ALARMING!** Erosion doubled in a decade

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**KOLKATA:** The Sunderbans is eroding at twice the rate than that over the past 70 years, a recent study has revealed.

"The rate of erosion has doubled since 2000, compared with that in the 70 years between 1930 and 2000," said Aditya Ghosh, senior coordinator (Climate Change), of the Centre for Science and Environment.

Between 1930 and 2000, the Sunderbans has lost almost 283.58 sq.km of land. In these 70 years, however, it also gained 83.97 sq.km. This points to an annual loss of 2.85 sq.km of land till 2000. But, between 2000 and 2008, the total amount of land lost was 61.162

sq.km and that gained was 20.120 sq.km. The net erosion was 5.5 sq.km per year.

The study, titled "Living with Climate Change: Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Adaptation Challenges in Indian Sunderbans", was presented in Kolkata on Wednesday at a programme organised jointly by the CSE and the South Asian Forum for Environment.

The 10 sea-facing islands in the southern Sunderbans - Sagar, Ghoramara, Jambudwip, Namkhana, Mousuni, Dakshin Surendranagar, Dhanchi, Dalhousie, Bulchery and Bhangaduani, are the most vulnerable. Together, they account for almost 69% of the land lost to the sea.

CONTINUED ON P11

## Sunderbans erosion doubles in just a decade: CSE report

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

River expert Kayan Rudra said the reasons behind this phenomenon were many. While, on one hand, the sea level is rising at an alarming rate, on the other, there are such factors as subsidence of deltaic islands and erosion by the sea and rivers.

"The sea level in the region is rising at a rate higher than that of the global average. In the past 25 years, the sea level has risen at a rate almost double that of the global average," Ghosh said. The last published research conducted by the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa indicated an increase of 5.7mm per year in the sea level between 2000 and 2004. Earlier, during 1991 and 1999, the sea level rise in the Sunderbans was 3.14mm per year. "Even the rainfall pattern is changing and cyclone intensity has increased over the decades. The result: crops are being affected because of cli-

### SOME OF THE FINDINGS



- Sea surface temperature in the Sunderbans is increasing at 0.5°C per decade. The global rise is 0.06°C per decade
- Severe cyclones have increased by 26% over the past 120 years

- In past 80 years, Sunderbans has lost almost 250 sq.km
- Population density of the Sunderbans is almost 1,000 people per sq.km, increasing at 18% per decade

mate change," Ghosh added.

Tushar Kanjilal of the Tagore Society for Rural Development, who has spent almost his entire life in the Sunderbans, said, "While the amount of rainfall in June has gone down by 48mm over the past century, the farmers are now getting more rain in September. This is affecting their kharif crop."

Chief environment officer of the state environment department Debol Roy said the state was already busy working on preparing the action plan for mitigating climate change. "We're almost done with the draft plan. The Sunderbans part is missing. We hope to submit it by the third week of March," he added.

