

# Sundarbans has 'Lost 110 Sq Km of Mangroves in Two Decades'

## IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

*5.2 mm rise in sea levels have inundated several islands & turned inhabitants into 'climate refugees', say experts*

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**Kolkata:** West Bengal has lost 110 square kilometres of mangroves in the Sundarbans in the past two decades due to climate change and global warming, according to experts. They said the "climate refugees", who have been forced to migrate from various islands in the Sundarbans, are facing the rage of nature.

"Huge mangroves were lost in the British era as well. There is a 5.2 mm rise in sea levels in the Sunderbans. People have been affected by the sea as rising levels of sea water have inundated their lands," Prof Sugata Hazra, director, School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University, told ET.

People have faced the wrath of nature in Sunderbans delta's Mousuni island as well, he said,

adding that after Cyclone Yaas, 3,000 families were relocated to other locations from Ghoramara island due to rise in sea levels and submerging of the island.

"Following my research, I have found that the mangrove region in West Bengal, due to climate change, is in much more vulnerable condition compared to Bangladesh," said Hazra. "Submerging of their lands have compelled the dwellers to leave their own lands."

Another expert, Prof Sunando Bandopadhyay of Calcutta University, said, "The impact of climate change has increased the number of cyclones in the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. In

the northern Bay of Bengal, thus affecting West Bengal and Bangladesh. Cyclone Yaas, coinciding with high tide, had caused widespread inundation," he said.

The mangroves, which act as a protective shield for West Bengal, especially Kolkata, get damaged due to the cyclones, he said.

"Loss of the mangroves cannot be compensated by planting mangroves. However, the West Bengal government has created 85 sq km of mangrove plantation which is commendable. There is threat to tiger habitat as

well due to damage to the mangroves," said Bandopadhyay.

Hazra said the highest sea level rise has been seen in South 24 Parganas district's Diamond Harbour. "There are issues pertaining to land subsidence and sea-level rise. However, there is hardly any risk assessment done anywhere. There is a change in rain pattern also as a direct impact of climate change," he said.

India should initiate a dialogue with Bangladesh on climate change, apart from conservation of mangroves, said Abhijit Chatterjee, senior scientist, Bose Institute.

future, cyclones will decrease in number but the intensity will increase, which is a major concern."

Bandopadhyay said cyclones Aila, Amphan and Yaas have adversely impacted the mangroves. "We have observed through our research that most of the cyclones in the east coast have been concentrated

**Mangrove region in West Bengal, due to climate change, is in much more vulnerable condition compared to Bangladesh... India should initiate a dialogue with Bangladesh on climate change, apart from conservation of mangroves: Experts**

