

# Global warming taking toll on paddy cultivation

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**KOLKATA:** Rise in sea level, increasing salinity and floods are taking a heavy toll on paddy cultivation in India and Bangladesh.

Further compounding the woes on this front, trade embargoes between the neighbours have for years thwarted the free passage of stress tolerant paddy seeds, which could have helped the farmers of both countries.

Experts have suggested that the neighbours should come together on World Environment Day, observed the world over on June 5, and lift all curbs to cross-border trade in the interest of tackling the onslaught of climate change and global warming on paddy.

An ongoing two-year survey by NGO CUTS International, with funds from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, shows that farmers of both countries rely on each other for the supply of paddy seeds and the trade curbs have left them with little option but to procure low-quality seeds, which are often smuggled across the border in small quantities.

"According to one estimate, nearly 12% of paddy cultivation is done with such Indian varieties as Swarna, Parijata and Rajendra. The same is

## WETLANDS ACT

The state government and railways is filling up a section of Captain's Bheri that falls under the East Kolkata Wetlands - that got the international status of a Ramsar Site in 2002. While 3,500 acre on the western side of Captain's Behri has been filled up by railways to construct pillars for the New Garia - Airport extension, the state government is filling up another 3,000 acre on the eastern side to construct an eco park. **HTC**

true for some eastern states of India including West Bengal, where some Bangladeshi varieties such as BR11 have become hot favourite," D Guha, secretary of the Seed Association of Bengal, said. Experts said that informally traded and smuggled seeds are often found to be of low quality, impacting rice yields.

"Bilateral cooperation with regard to trading of rice seeds seem one viable option. Such trade and sharing of knowledge have the potential of making the market more competitive in terms of price and quality," said Suresh P Singh, a policy analyst with CUTS International.