



## Bon Bibi: Sundarban

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### Why in News

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A centuries-old folk theatre form and the worship of a **forest goddess** i.e. **Bon Bibi** has helped the natives of the **Sundarban** survive by understanding the power of nature and the limits of human needs.

### Key Points

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- **Bon Bibi:** Bon Bibi is a **deity of the forest** and the central character of **Bon Bibir Palagaan, a musical drama unique** to the Sundarbans.
  - Shrines to Bon Bibi and her twin brother Shah Jongoli dot the landscape of the Sundarbans.
  - The followers of Bon Bibi are fishermen, crab-collectors and honey-gatherers who live in the mangroves with wild animals such as tigers and crocodiles to earn a livelihood.
  - They believe that only Bon Bibi protects them when they enter the forest and survive in tiger dominated areas.
- **Bon Bibir Palagaan:** People express their belief in Bon Bibi through Bon Bibir Palagaan, **a dramatic storytelling form** that is enacted throughout the island. Traditionally, the performances are held near Bon Bibi temples or villages bordering the forests.
- **Significance:**
  - An unwritten code believed to be given by the deity prohibits islanders from carrying guns or weapons into the forest.
  - They must enter the forest only if they absolutely need to earn a livelihood and not take more — honey or crabs, fish or prawns — than they need.
  - They must not pollute the forest in any way, by smoking, defecating or washing utensils.
  - According to a local lore, poachers, pirates and those who disobey Bon Bibi are attacked by tigers as punishment.

## Sundarbans



- The **Sundarbans** is a mangrove area in the delta formed by the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers in the Bay of Bengal.
- It spans from the **Hooghly River in India's state of West Bengal** to the **Baleswar River in Bangladesh**.
- The active delta region is among the **largest in the world**, measuring about 40,000 sq km.
- India's Sundarban was declared as the **UNESCO'S World Heritage site** in 1987.
  - Sunderban Wetland has been accorded the status of 'Wetland of International Importance' under **Ramsar Convention** in 2019.
  - Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve (National Park) is an Important Bird Area under Birdlife International.
- The area is known for many rare and globally threatened wildlife species such as the estuarine **crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*), **royal Bengal tiger** (*Panthera tigris*), Water monitor lizard (*Varanus salvator*), **gangetic dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica*), and **olive ridley turtle** (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).
- **Sajnekhali Bird Sanctuary** is a part of Sundarban and is famous for the sight of rare birds.

**Source: IE**