



## Sundarbans

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### Why in News

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Promises related to development of Sundarbans are being made by different political parties, ahead of West Bengal assembly elections.

Sundarbans region was badly damaged by **Cyclone Amphan** in 2020.

### Key Points

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- It is a **vast contiguous mangrove forest ecosystem** in the coastal region of Bay of Bengal **spread over India and Bangladesh** on the **delta (world's largest)** of the **Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers**.  
It contains the world's largest mangrove forests.
- Much of the area has long had the status of a forest reserve, but **conservation efforts in India** were stepped up with the **creation of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in 1973**.
- **Sundarbans National Park**, established in **1984**, constitutes a core region within the tiger reserve; it was **designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987**.
- Sunderbans was designated as a **Biosphere Reserve** by UNESCO in 2001.
- **Sundarban Wetland**, India was recognised as the '**Wetland of International Importance**' under the **Ramsar Convention** in January 2019.
- **Sunderban National Park** is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species and is home to many rare and globally threatened wildlife species such as the **Estuarine Crocodile**, Royal Bengal Tiger, Water Monitor Lizard, **Gangetic Dolphin** and **Olive Ridley Turtles**.
- The **Sunderbans Delta is the only mangrove forest in the world inhabited by tigers**.

For its preservation, Discovery India and **World Wide Fund (WWF)** India partnered with the Government of West Bengal and local communities in the Sundarbans in 2019.



## **Mangroves**

- Mangroves are the plant communities occurring in **inter-tidal zones** along the coasts of tropical and subtropical countries.
- Mangrove forests **perform multiple ecological functions** such as production of woody trees, provision of habitat, food and spawning grounds for fin-fish and shellfish, provision of habitat for birds and other valuable fauna; protection of coastlines and accretion of sediment to form new land.
- Among the states and Union Territories, **West Bengal has the highest percentage of area under total Mangrove cover** followed by Gujarat and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The **India State of Forest Report** gives the data about mangroves and their conditions in the country.

**Source: TH**