Conserving the Sundarbans

What is the issue?

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The steady loss of mangroves in the Sundarbans makes conservation efforts vital.

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What are mangroves?

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- A mangrove is a shrub or small tree that grows in coastal saline or brackish water.
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- Mangroves are salt tolerant trees, also called halophytes, and are adapted to life in harsh coastal conditions.
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- They are adapted to the low oxygen (anoxic) conditions of waterlogged mud.
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What are the importance of mangroves?

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- It is a nature's shield against cyclones, ecological disasters and as protector of shorelines.
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- Breeding and nursery grounds for a variety of marine animals.
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- Good source of timber, fuel and fodder.
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- Purifies air by absorbing pollutants in the air.
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What are the significance of Sundarbans mangroves?

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- It is the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangrove forest in the world.
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- It is spread across parts of Bangladesh's Khulna Division and the Indian state of West Bengal.
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- In the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta, Sundari trees are found, which provide durable hard timber.
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- This mangrove forests are known to serve as a habitat for turtles, crocodiles, gharials, snakes and tigers.
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- This area covers a National Park, Tiger reserve and a Biosphere Reserve.
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- It serves as a protective flood barrier for the inhabitants of Kolkata during cyclone.
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What is the need for conservation?

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- Long-term damage to the mangroves on the Indian side occurred when forests were cut to facilitate cultivation.
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- Climate change appears to be a threat to the entire 10,000 sq km area.
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- There is also a unique population of tigers that live here, adapted to move easily across the land-sea interface.
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- Human settlements which depends on this mangroves for their lively hood, which will be ruined due to environmental concerns.
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How it can be done?

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- Local actions are needed to protect the banks from erosion.
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- Strengthening the mangroves with endemic species that can thrive in

changing salinity conditions can provide co-benefits to local communities.
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- Ecotourism holds the potential to raise awareness and funds for the conservation.
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- International climate finance to be channelled to India and Bangladesh for the region’s preservation.
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- Climate research and social science have a synergistic role in giving the Sundarbans a greater chance of survival.
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Source: The Hindu

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