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Title: Need to protect the Sundarbans.

SHRIMATI PRATIMA MONDAL (JAYANAGAR): The Sundarbans is the largest Mangrove forest ecosystem in the world and consists of an intricate network of tidal waterways, marshy patches and numerous islands. It is famed for its rich biological diversity, the prime attraction being the expansive mangrove forests.

Annually 2.4 billion tonnes of sediments is transported by the major rivers of Bangladesh. This situation is having a profound effect on the flood plains and the coastal region. Silt deposition in the northern part of the forest poses a threat to the existence and vigorous growth of mangrove vegetation. Progressive silt deposition has caused a rise in the forest floor and due to irregular flow of tidal water, Mangroves are not properly regenerated. In the year 2009, cyclone *Aila* has destroyed almost all the islands of the Sundarbans along with mangrove forests. Further, due to years of dumping of plastic waste, water flow is severely obstructed leading to merging of forests land with human habitation regions, consequently endangering human life in the neighbouring villages.

Further, salinity levels have increased in the Sundarbans since the Hathabhanga, Kobadak and other rivers bringing fresh Water from the Ganges to the South have silted up excessively thereby losing their connection with the Ganges. As a result, the regeneration of Sundari, the dominant timber species in the forest has been reduced in the Southwestern part of the Sundarbans. The Sunderbans is on the verge of disintegrating and disappearing.

In the light of the above facts, I would urge the Minister concerned to take remedial steps to protect the Sundarbans and especially preserve the mangroves.

HON. CHAIRPERSON : Shrimati Sakuntala Laguri – Not present.