

PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS OF WEST BENGAL

- West Bengal is essentially a **flat, featureless alluvial plain**.
- A large portion of **southern Bengal** is a part of the **delta** of the **river Ganga**.
- Merely **1% of its area** is **mountainously** lying in the far **north** of the state.
- About **6% of the total** land areas are **plateau** fringe and **Puruliya triangle** of upland along the western border.

On the basis of these features, West Bengal may be divided into **seven physical regions**:

- The Northern Mountain Region
- The Western Plateau Fringe
- The Plains
 - ❖ The Northern Plains
 - ❖ The Southern Plains
- Tarai Region
- Rarh Region
- The Sunderban Delta
- The Coastal Fringe

The Northern Mountain Region

- The northern mountain region is situated on the **north-western part** of West Bengal and belongs to the **Eastern Himalayan range**.
- This region covers the whole of the Darjeeling district except the Siliguri division and some parts of the Jalpaiguri district.
- This region consists of sedimentary and metamorphic rocks.
- This northern part is faced with rising mountain ranges in the Himalaya and downslope to hills on the border of Jalpaiguri district, the hills may give rise to rolling humid plains known as 'Duars'.
- Teesta river divided this region into western and eastern parts.
- Most of the highest mountain ranges are seen in the **western part of the Teesta river**. Sandakphu (3630 mt), Phalut (3595 mt), Tonglu (3036 mt).
- The eastern part of the Teesta River is lower than the western part of the Teesta river. The famous Kalimpong town is situated in this region.
- Few hills are also found in the Dooars region at the foot of the Himalayas. Some remnants of the Siwaliks mountain ranges can be seen in the Jalpaiguri district where they are known as the **Buxa-Jayanti Hills**.

The Western Plateau Fringe

- This region is situated in the **western part** of West Bengal.
- This plateau region connecting the **Rajmahal hills of Bihar** and **Chotanagpur plateau** is the part of Chotanagpur plateau.

- This region is made of **old igneous rock granite** and **gneiss** of the Archaean era as well as **coal-bearing mudstone** and **quartzite rocks** of the Carboniferous period.
- **Puruliya** district (100 meters) has the highest mountain **Ayodhya hill** (677 meters) in this region.
- Because of long and continuous erosion, the whole region has been transformed into an undulating peneplain interspersed by small **monadnocks** locally known as *tila*.

Plains

- Except for the northern hilly mountainous and western plateau area, the **remaining** is the Plain area.
- North Bengal plain starts from the south of the Terai region and continues up to the left bank of the Ganges.
- Ganga River flows from west to east and divides the plain into the northern and southern parts.
- This plain is formed mainly by the alluvium of the Ganga River and its branches.
- The narrow landmass in North Dinajpur district which is known as **Mahananda Corridor** runs from north to south direction and joins Maldah with the plains of Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar.
- Mahananda River divides the district of Maldah into eastern and western parts.
- The eastern part known as '**Barind**' or '**Barendrabhumi**' consists of an undulating plain and is made of old alluvium which is a part of the Ganges delta.
- The western part, on the other hand, is made of new alluvium and in this section, **River Kalindi** meets with the **Mahananda River**.
- The part of Maldah lying to the **north** of river **Kalindri** is known as *tal*.
- This is lowland and covered with **swamps** and **beels** (small water bodies) whereas the area the south of the Kalindi is very fertile land and is known as *diara*.
- The western plain has been largely built up by the **silt** brought by the western tributaries of the **Bhagirathi**

Tarai Region

- The "Tarai" (*moist land*) is a belt of marshy **grasslands**, **savannas**, and **forests** at the *base of the Himalaya* range stretching southwards to about 38 km.
- This region extends to the **Siliguri division** of Darjeeling district, the north and eastern part of **Jalpaiguri**, and the **northern part of Dinajpur**.
- The **Teesta** has divided the area into two parts- the **western part** is known as the *Tarai* whereas the **eastern part** is known as the *Dooars* or Duars.

Rarh Region

- This region intervenes between the southern Ganges delta and the western plateau region.
- Rarh region extends from north to south between 50 meters contour in the east and 100-meter contour in the west.
- This region constitutes the districts of Birbhum, Bardhaman, Bankura, Murshidabad, and Medinipur.

- This region is believed to be created from the soil from the Deccan plateau.
- This region is dominated by laterite soil.

Sundarban Delta

- The Sundarbans delta is the **largest mangrove forest** in the world.
- '**Sundari**' trees are found in abundance in this region and hence known as 'Sundarban'.
- It consists of the Hoogly river estuary and newly created Ganga delta characterized by tidal creeks, mud floods, and newly formed islands.
- Mangrove Forest is listed in the UNESCO world heritage list separately as the Sundarbans and Sundarbans National Park respectively.
- This area has been created by the deposition of silt by its numerous rivers namely, Hoogly, Matla, Jamira, Gosaba, Saptamukhi, Haribhanga river, and their tributaries.
- The most famous among these is the Royal Bengal Tiger, but numerous species of birds, spotted deer, crocodiles, and snakes also inhabit it. It is estimated that there are now **400 Bengal tigers** and about **30,000 spotted deer** in the area.

Coastal Fringe

- The coastal plain region is on the extreme south of the state.
- Part of the district of Purba Medinipur along the Bay of Bengal constitutes the coastal fringe.
- The beach at Digha in this region is a fast developing sea resort and becoming an important tourist spot.
- This emergent coastal plain is made up of sand and mud deposited by rivers as well as wind.