

Museum helps Sundarbans kids stay connected with their roots

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Kolkata: A museum was thrown open at a college at the remote Pathankhali island on Tuesday with an aim at making students aware of the history, heritage, art and culture of the Sundarbans. The museum is the brainchild as well as the result of the hard work of 39-year-old librarian Sukumar Mondal of Sundarban Hazi Desarat College.

The museum was opened for students, researchers and the islanders in the presence of Udayan Bhattacharya, library and information science professor at JU. "The process of collecting Sundarbans-related items and authenticated data for the archive was not at all a cakewalk for us. We accepted the challenges, travelled to many places and had to convince collectors for voluntary contribution," said Mondal, who

KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE



► Apart from 27 types of miniature clay idols of gods and goddesses, the museum has a collection of books and collectibles like dolls, tiger masks, old maps, currency notes, stamps, books linked with the archipelago

started the planning in 2020. As many as 89 titles related to the Sundarbans have found a place at the museum, including a 1st century AD clay-made pottery recovered from Tilpi village near Piyali riverbank, an antique idol of mother Goddess from the ear-

ly Gupta period that was recovered from Gobardhanpur at G-plot in Pathar Pratima block and a very rare piece of Re 1 bank note that was introduced by Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton at Gosaba in 1938.

"The collection will help our students connect with

their roots," said Tarun Mandal, principal of the college in the Gosaba block. He has already sanctioned Rs 1 lakh.

There are 27 types of miniature clay idols of Hindu gods and goddess as well as of 'pir; (Muslim warrior saint) that are still worshipped by the islanders. "There are many myths linked with the islanders. We have tried to portray these through these miniature idols so that people visiting the library can get acquainted with the local rituals and cultures," said Ujjwal Sardar, a Sundarbans research scholar attached to Rajshahi University, Bangladesh. Sardar was also one of the guided forces who contributed many of his personal collections.

About 100 kms south of Kolkata, the 63-years-old college is the only one in the Indian Sundarbans. It is situated on an island established by the freedom fighters from Midnapore in 1961.