



Kaziranga and Brahmaputra Floods

What is the issue?

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While on one side Kerala is devastated by floods, here is why floods are crucial and beneficial for the Kaziranga national park.

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Why is Brahmaputra significant for Kaziranga?

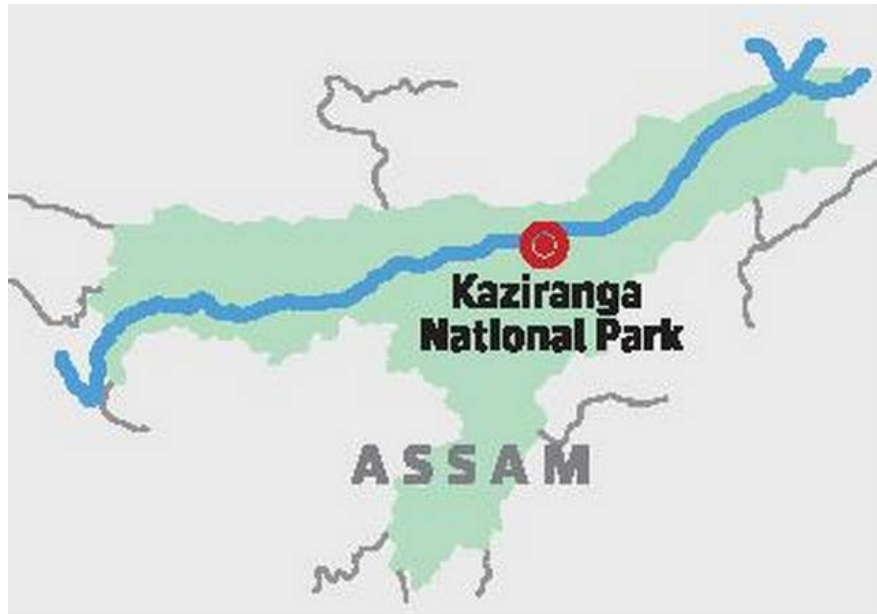
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- Kaziranga National Park is a 117-year-old park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.
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- Every year, the Brahmaputra takes away portions of land from the Park.
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- Resultantly, on paper the park is 1,030 sq km in area, but in reality it is 884 sq km.
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- It also continues to shrink year after year.
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- It affects mostly hog deer, swamp deer, wild boar and other few animals.
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- These are those that fail to reach higher ground in time after floods.
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- Despite the above, Brahmaputra contributes more to, than harms, the wildlife in the park.
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- It gives more to the habitat of the world's largest population of one-horned rhinos.
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- The unique biodiversity of Kaziranga is rejuvenated by a dynamic system that connects the Brahmaputra with its alluvial floodplains.
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- But this year, the park has not been inundated, causing concerns for the park authorities.

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Why are floods essential?

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- Floods have long been beneficial to Kaziranga and Assam. Click [here](#) to know more.
- The deluge happens up to four times a year between April and October.
- Unlike farmlands across the Brahmaputra floodplain, monsoon floods are essential to Kaziranga's ecosystem.
- Kaziranga's plant and animal life are intrinsically linked to the floods.
- Its vast grasslands and beels (wetlands) are revitalised annually by the Brahmaputra's overflow.
- The floods help deposit mineral-rich alluvial soil.
- This facilitates growth of grass and shrubs that are the main source of fodder for herbivores.
- Besides, the floodwaters, while receding, flush out aquatic weeds and

unwanted plants.

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What are the concerns?

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- During floods, animals in Kaziranga flee to higher grounds within the park.
- These include 111 highlands built in the late 1990s.
- Each of them is 12 ft high and large enough to accommodate up to 50 large animals.
- There are 33 more being built, each 16 ft high, with a total area of 22 hectares.
- But when 70-80% of Kaziranga is under water, the animals usually flee to the hills of Karbi Anglong.
- This is located south of the park beyond a National Highway running along its edge.
- Speed of vehicles is regulated during floods, but some animals invariably get killed.
- Of greater worry is the destruction of the hills because of indiscriminate stone quarrying.
- Some of the major quarries are on animal corridors and thus affect their movement.
- Quarrying has increased, and extracted materials have been dumped at sites adjoining the park.
- So if floods happen, Kaziranga's animals could find their escape route blocked or altered.
- Hence, while floods are good for the park, it needs interventions to make them really beneficial for environment and ecology.

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Source: The Hindu

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