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 beneficious 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.
- Every year, the Brahmaputra takes away portions of land from the Park.
- Resultantly, on paper the park is 1,030 sq km in area, but in reality it is 884 sq km.
- It also continues to shrink year after year.
- It affects mostly hog deer, swamp deer, wild boar and other few animals.
- These are those that fail to reach higher ground in time after floods.
- Despite the above, Brahmaputra contributes more to, than harms, the wildlife in the park.
- It gives more to the habitat of the world’s largest population of one-horned rhinos.
- The unique biodiversity of Kaziranga is rejuvenated by a dynamic system that connects the Brahmaputra with its alluvial floodplains.
- 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 beneficious to Kaziranga and Assam. Click here to know more.
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- The deluge happens up to four times a year between April and October.
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- Unlike farmlands across the Brahmaputra floodplain, monsoon floods are essential to Kaziranga’s ecosystem.
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- Kaziranga’s plant and animal life are intrinsically linked to the floods.
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- Its vast grasslands and beels (wetlands) are revitalised annually by the Brahmaputra’s overflow.
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- The floods help deposit mineral-rich alluvial soil.
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- This facilitates growth of grass and shrubs that are the main source of fodder for herbivores.
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- 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.
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- These include 111 highlands built in the late 1990s.
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- Each of them is 12 ft high and large enough to accommodate up to 50 large animals.
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- There are 33 more being built, each 16 ft high, with a total area of 22

hectares.
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- But when 70-80% of Kaziranga is under water, the animals usually flee to the hills of Karbi Anglong.
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- This is located south of the park beyond a National Highway running along its edge.
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- Speed of vehicles is regulated during floods, but some animals invariably get killed.
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- Of greater worry is the destruction of the hills because of indiscriminate stone quarrying.
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- Some of the major quarries are on animal corridors and thus affect their movement.
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- Quarrying has increased, and extracted materials have been dumped at sites adjoining the park.
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- So if floods happen, Kaziranga’s animals could find their escape route blocked or altered.
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- Hence, while floods are good for the park, it needs interventions to make them really beneficious for environment and ecology.
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Source: The Hindu

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