

Floods in Assam

What is the issue?

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In Assam, floods have claimed more than 50 lives, nearly 18 lakh have been affected by it and most of the Kaziranga National Park was submerged.

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How vulnerable is Assam?

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- According to the **National Flood Commission of India (NFCI)**, about 40% of the state's area is flood-prone.

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- The floods caused by the release of water in the Brahmaputra's upstream have become a common monsoon bane in Assam.

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- **Human-made factors** have compounded this annual problem.

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- After the North East Electric Power Corporation opened up its dams to release water from the Ranganadi Hydro-electric Project, the problems have compounded.

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- The floods are also caused by the **runoff** of heavy rainfall during the monsoon and by the **high sediment loads** from upper watersheds that are geologically unstable and degraded.

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Why the problem still persists?

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- Assam's policymakers are well aware of the problems emanating from the Brahmaputra's upstream.

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- However, the authorities **have not yet come together to resolve the**

issue.

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- Even within Assam, agencies which should be working together to keep the floods in check, have operated along different lines.

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- While the state's disaster management authority has correctly identified the **geological instability**, Assam's water resource department continues to dwell on the discredited system of embankments.

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- But, the floods in the past have shown that when the Brahmaputra swells up, it puts pressure on the embankments, thus causing breaches.

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- Also, studies have also shown that the Brahmaputra changes course frequently.

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- It is virtually impossible to contain the river within the embankments.

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- The solution lies in dialogue between upper and lower riparian states. In this case, it is Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

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- The Brahmaputra is among the better studied of the country's rivers, so, it is high time to put the research to practice.

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What is National Flood Control Programme?

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- The National Flood Control Programme was launched in 1954 for the first time, in the country.

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- During the period of two decades, considerable experience had also been gained in planning, implementation and performance of the flood protection and control measures.

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- It then required detailed study of various problems concerned with flood control measures and aspects like soil conservation and afforestation.

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- Government, therefore, decided to set up **the Rashtriya Barh Ayog** (National Flood Commission of India) in 1976 to evolve a coordinated, integrated and scientific approach to the flood control problems.

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- And to draw out a national plan fixing priorities for implementation in the

future.

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Source: The Indian Express

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