

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK SET TO BE EXPANDED BY 3,053 HECTARES

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

A tourist road inside the Kaziranga National Park in Assam. File | Photo Credit: [Ritu Raj Konwar](#)

The Assam government has approved the addition of 30.53 sq km to the 884 sq km Kaziranga National Park.

The additional areas straddling two districts — Nagaon and Sonitpur — would make the larger Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) grow to 1085.53 sq km. However, the wildlife habitat still awaits the possession 14.62 sq km “added” earlier in two other districts.

The core area of the KNPTR is 430 sq km.

A Forest Department spokesperson said preliminary notifications were for seventh, eighth and ninth additions on Thursday.

“The additions include encroachment-evicted areas and suitable wildlife habitat on river islands (sandbars) that are vulnerable to encroachment. It is a move to consolidate the wildlife areas anticipating better wildlife conservation and reduction in human-wildlife negative interactions in the future,” KNPTR director P. Sivakumar said.

He added that the three additions are habitat corridors and would help provide connectivity to Orang and Nameri National Parks across river Brahmaputra from KNPTR besides the hills of Karbi Anglong to the south of the park, where the rhino, tiger, deer and other animals take refuge during the floods.

“Of course, we will need more manpower to guard the additional areas,” Mr Sivakumar said.

The seventh and eight additions totalling 4.83 sq km are in Nagaon district while the ninth, covering 25.70 sq km, is in Sonitpur district.

Wildlife activists have appreciated the official stamp on the expansion of KNPTR but have pointed out that the rhino habitat is yet to be handed over possession of 1,461.59 hectares (14.62 sq km) of land comprising the second, third, fifth and sixth additions in Golaghat and Biswanath districts.

On August 17, the Gauhati High Court had directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam, to submit an action-taken report on eviction of encroachers in areas added to the park earlier.

The court had on October 9, 2015, ordered the eviction of encroachers in the second, third, fifth and sixth additions to the KNPTR while observing that the State government delivered a total of 39,836.74 hectares covering the first and fourth additions.

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, the KNPTR has an estimated 2,413 rhinos and 121 tigers.

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