

# Apeejay, WWF team up to tackle human-elephant conflict

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APEEJAY Tea, one of the country's oldest and currently third largest tea producer and an arm of the Apeejay Surrendra Enterprise, has now teamed up with WWF-India to come up with a sustainable solution to prevent and manage human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Assam. The two groups will implement a 3-year exhaustive management strategy in the most affected elephant landscapes of the state.

Although the piloting will be done at four tea estates owned by Apeejay Tea, which are in the hot zone in so far as HEC is concerned, the same plan and matrix

can be replicated by other impacted tea estates eventually, said A K Bhargava, MD, Apeejay Tea, said.

"Apeejay Tea recognises the need for bringing into action a sustainable plan for minimising and resolving human elephant conflict in the tea gardens of Assam, a plan which can be easily replicated by other impacted tea estates. So far, Apeejay Tea has done its best to work with other NGOs and forest development of Assam to conserve and protect wild life, including elephants. Our approach has been 'our home and theirs'. A better, stronger and sustainable co-existence strategy was needed as the forest habitats of elephants have depleted



**SAVING THE PACHYDERM :** The two groups will implement a 3-year strategy in the most affected elephant landscapes

rapidly and more and more animals have sought shelter in our estates," he said.

As a starter, a matrix will be developed to calculate the quantum of loss that is usually borne by the tea estates on account of damage to

property, including tea bushes and shade trees, infrastructure and injuries among residents. The matrix will get the issue into strategic focus and will attract attention and investment for a new agenda for

adaptation and management that would be win-win for all stakeholders, top Apeejay Tea officials said.

Dipankar Ghose, director (species and landscapes programme), WWF-India, said that they had undertaken similar projects for some time now and therefore development of such a matrix should not take more than six months. In fact, development of the matrix and implementation of the project would happen simultaneously.

Apeejay and WWF have identified Dhulapadung, Ghoirallie, Borjuli and Sessa tea estates in Sontipur district to kick off the project.

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