



For Immediate Release

Apeejay Tea and WWF announce impact of 3-year collaboration on Human-Elephant Conflict management in Sonitpur

Guwahati, 24th August: Apeejay Tea and WWF India today announced the outcomes of their successful partnership (2015-18) to prevent and manage Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) at select areas in Assam. The three-year partnership between Apeejay Tea and WWF-India was a first of its kind to support HEC management measures in Assam's Sonitpur district, particularly in the tea plantations.

Announcing the outcomes of the successful partnership with Apeejay Tea, **Dr. Dipankar Ghose, Director, Species and Landscapes, WWF-India** said, *"WWF-India's 3-year long partnership with Apeejay Tea has yielded positive impacts for managing human-elephant conflict in Sonitpur district. Through intensive conflict management strategy in the conflict prone plantations, a range of initiatives have been implemented which were found to be successful in reducing losses related to human-elephant conflict."*

The result of this three-year partnership has long term significance for both WWF-India as a conservation organization and for Apeejay Tea as a corporate partner, an important stakeholder in human-elephant conflict management in Assam. As part of the partnership, WWF-India worked closely with the Apeejay Tea management, residents and the local community to manage HEC in Sonitpur through holistic solutions in four of Apeejay Tea's 17 estates in Assam – namely Borjuli, Ghoirallie, Dhulapadung and Sessa Tea Estates - located in Sonitpur.

Ms. Renu Kakkar, Director CSR, Apeejay Surrendra Group said, *"More than 50% deaths caused by human elephant conflict were recorded from tea gardens in Sonitpur when Apeejay Tea and WWF India decided to work together. At that time Apeejay Tea's four estates in Sonitpur were affected by HEC as were the other tea gardens in the district. Apeejay Tea was perhaps the first tea company to fund an intensive conflict management strategy in Sonitpur. As a donor as well as a victim of HEC, the successes of our partnership with WWF-India have brought us valuable insights on solutions."*

Low cost solar power fences installed across the Apeejay Tea estates have demonstrated effectiveness in minimizing HEC related loss to human life and property, a concept that has already been adopted by many government and non-government agencies in the state. A scalable bio fence, using thorny bamboo was also introduced to prevent the entry of wild elephants into vulnerable areas of the tea garden when ready. Regular village level meetings & interaction, Anti Depredation Squad orientations and street plays were important components to create awareness on elephants and HEC management.

Going forward, WWF- India and Apeejay Tea today announced that a broad human-elephant conflict management protocol and strategy across all tea gardens in the Brahmaputra landscape was the need of the hour as is evident from the results of their partnership. *"Apeejay Tea will be setting up a Platform of Collaboration between other tea companies and WWF to enable WWF to collaborate with them as closely and as successfully as it has with Apeejay Tea. Based on our learnings from the 3-year long project, we believe that a multi-party collaboration will aid WWF to implement large scale interventions across all tea gardens in the landscape and develop a broad human-elephant conflict management protocol followed by all," Renu Kakkar added.*

A consistent approach to manage conflict related to elephants across Assam's tea gardens could help protect Asia's largest terrestrial species, and reduce loss of property and human and elephant mortalities. *"At WWF India, we believe that we will be able to scale up these initiatives to other plantation areas with the support of the local community, Assam Forest Department, elected public representatives (MPs/MLAs), and civil administration,"* added Dr Ghose.

A positive change in attitude of residents of Apeejay Tea estates towards elephants has been noted by the Assam Forest Department officials. Apeejay Tea and WWF-India have documented successful strategies in Apeejay Tea



Estates into a 15- minute educative film 'HamaraGhar' which can be used for managing human elephant conflict by other tea gardens.

The key Project Outcomes from the three year partnership are as follows:-

- Financial loss in Apeejay Tea Estates as a result of HEC has reduced by 74 % in the last three years.
- Reduction in number of human & elephant deaths due to human-elephant conflict in Sonitpur: 3 elephants and 11 human beings in 2017 as compared to 8 elephant deaths and 16 human deaths in the year 2013.
- 7 Early Warning System has been installed - 6 units each of Passive Infra-Red system in Apeejay Tea's Dhulapadung and Sessa estates and one Active Infra-Red system in Sessa TE.
- On 111 occasions, wild elephants have been successfully driven back to the nearby forests with the help of trained captive elephants or *kunkis* in the year 1 of project
- 14 orientation meetings on HEC management measures conducted in 3 years of the project.
- Field training on HEC management provided to more than 1000 frontline staff and members of anti-depredation squads (ADS) in Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Nagaon districts, at the fringe of Kaziranga NP.
- 47 street plays, 20 film screenings and 1000 posters have been used in HECM communication campaign.
- Solar street lights installed in 28 vulnerable locations inside Apeejay Tea Estates to stop sudden human elephant interface.
- Introduction of innovative solution- 12.5 km of fence of Thorny bamboo has been planted and maintained by Apeejay Tea.
- Two nurseries for nurturing the Thorny Bamboo saplings created and maintained in Apeejay Tea Estates. Current stock of saplings is 9063.
- A matrix has been created to calculate the quantum of loss incurred due to elephants.
- 70 Anti-Depredation Squads formed and more than 1600 members trained in Sonitpur of which 20 ADS and over 300 were trained in Apeejay Tea's estates.
- Over 8000 people living in Apeejay Tea estate areas and neighboring villages made aware of solutions to human elephant conflict.
- Crop damage by elephants in the Nagaon division down to 120 acres in 2017 as compared to more than 442.5 acres last year, due to installation of solar fences
- Conflict has reduced by 90%, after the installation of 136 km of low cost solar fences in North Bank Landscape in partnerships with communities, Assam Forest Department, local MLAs and other stakeholders. Of this 15.5 km is in Apeejay Tea Estates and 17 people have been trained for their maintenance. About 2,00,000 people are reaping the benefits of these fences installed round sensitive establishments like Schools, Public Health Centres and residential areas.

For Media Queries, please contact-

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About Apeejay Tea

Apeejay Tea, an Apeejay Surrendra Enterprise, is amongst India's oldest and 3rd largest tea producer. It has 17 tea estates in the prime tea growing areas of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Udalguri and Sonitpur District of Assam spread over 50,000 acres. The Estates are ISO 9001: 2008 certified and are under Ethical Tea Partnership. Two premium estates Khobong & Budlabeta are HACCP Certified and 11 of our estates are Rainforest Alliance Certified and 13 of our estates have Trustea certifications and all the estates follow the Sustainable Agricultural Network standards. Apeejay Tea acquired Typhoo, UK's third largest and an over 100-year-old iconic British tea brand, in 2005 which is today retailing in nearly 50 countries globally including India. To know more, please visit us at www.apeejaytea.com



About WWF-India

WWF-India is one of the largest conservation organizations in the country, engaged in wildlife and nature conservation. It has an experience of over four decades in the field and has made its presence felt through a sustained effort not only towards nature and wildlife conservation, but also through sensitizing people by creating awareness through capacity building and enviro-legal activism. The key areas of the work of WWF-India include conservation of key wildlife species and their habitats, management of rivers, wetlands and their eco-systems, promoting sustainable livelihoods, environment education and awareness activities within a variety of social structures, mitigating the impacts of climate change, transforming businesses and markets towards sustainability and combating illegal wildlife trade.

A part of WWF International, one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF-India has a nationwide presence in the country with over 60 state and field offices distributed over 20 states. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

To know more about WWF-India, please visit us at www.wwfindia.org