

Tea giant mulls protocol to fix jumbo-human conflict

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati: Apeejay Tea on Friday said it would collaborate with other tea companies to develop a broad human-elephant conflict management protocol, which can be followed by all to solve the man-elephant conflict.

“Based on our learning from the three-year project in Sonitpur district, we believe a multi-party collaboration will aid WWF to implement largescale intervention across all tea gardens in the landscape and develop a broad

human-elephant conflict management protocol followed by all,” director of CSR, Apeejay Surrendra Group, Renu Kakkar, said here on Friday.

Apeejay Tea and WWF India on Friday announced the outcome 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 Sonitpur district, particularly in tea plantations.

Kakkar said more than 50

per cent of the deaths caused by human-elephant conflict were recorded from tea gardens in Sonitpur before Apeejay Tea and WWF India decided to work together. “At that time the company’s four estates in Sonitpur were affected by HEC as were other tea gardens in the district. Our company 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 success of our partnership with WWF-India have brought us valuable insights on the solutions,” she said.

“Low cost solar-powered fences, installed across the company’s estates, have demonstrated effectiveness in minimising 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 and interaction, anti-depredation squad orientations and street plays were important compo-

nents to creating awareness on elephants and HEC management.

Dipankar Ghose, director (species and landscapes) WWF India said a consistent approach to manage conflict related to elephants across Assam’s tea gardens could help protect Asia’s largest terrestrial species and reduce human and elephant mortality. “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 and civil administration.



Renu Kakkar addresses the news conference in Guwahati on Friday