

# Tea major mulls initiatives to check human-elephant conflict

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GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Alarmed at the intensifying human-elephant conflict in Assam and West Bengal, the tea industry is advocating a multi-stakeholder collaboration for easing the conflict that has left many tea garden areas in the hot zone.

Leaders of the tea industry during a meet organized by the Indian Tea Association (ITA) in Kolkata on Friday resolved to partner WWF-India in tackling the problem.

Industry sources told *The Assam Tribune* that the meet studied the project outcome of the recent Apeejay Tea-WWF collaboration towards mitigating the human-elephant conflict and was planning a collaborative approach in Assam and West Bengal.

“We have studied the project outcome. We believe that a multi-stakeholder collaboration including the Government will aid implementation of large-scale interventions across the tea sector. Today was our first meeting involving tea companies and I am looking forward to a collaborative approach



emerging to take this forward,” Vivek Goenka, ITA chairman, said.

The industry meet was initiated by Karan Paul, chairman of Apeejay Tea, a member of ITA, which has been implementing conflict mitigation strategies with WWF for the last three years.

At the meet which saw participation

of 15 top tea companies and senior management of WWF, WWF presented a strategy to the ITA members and success stories of its three year-long collaboration with Apeejay Tea.

Dr Dipankar Ghose, director, Species and Landscapes programme, WWF-India, gave an account of the initiative in

Assam launched with the support of multiple stakeholders such as the Apeejay Tea, Assam Forest Department, elected public representatives, civil administration, and local communities.

“We have been utilizing multi-pronged approaches to address the human-elephant conflict. We believe that

we will be able to scale up these initiatives in Assam with the Indian Tea Association’s participation in effectively managing human-elephant conflict along with other stakeholders,” he said.

Karan Paul, Apeejay Surrendra Group and Apeejay Tea chairman said that his company was perhaps the first tea com-

pany to fund an intensive conflict management strategy in Sonitpur because four of their gardens were in the hot zone.

“The success of Apeejay Tea’s partnership with WWF-India for the last three years has brought us valuable insights on solutions to the human-elephant conflict issue. We have shared these with the ITA and hope to see a multi-party collaboration that will lead to the development of a broad human-elephant conflict management protocol followed by all tea gardens uniformly,” he added.

The industry meet called by ITA of similarly afflicted companies with gardens in conflict zones showed that there was a positive inclination in all companies to work together on solutions.

“We hope that we will be successful in creating a platform of collaboration as it will lead to implementation of large-scale interventions, tried and tested in Apeejay Tea gardens, and stem the loss of life and injury to people working in tea gardens and elephants across the Brahmaputra landscape,” Paul said.