

PRESS RELEASE

Training provided on Bhut Jolokia and Kaji Nemu plantations to help coexistence with elephants

Guwahati, March 6: One of the country's foremost biodiversity conservation organisations Aaranyak in collaboration with the British Asian Trust and with support from Darwin Initiative conducted a training workshop on Bhut Jolokia (King Chilli) plantations as well as crop infestation in Sadiya, Tinsukia district of Assam as an alternative crop to reduce HEC.

The initiative aims at supplementing people's livelihoods who have been affected by the burgeoning Human-elephant conflict (HEC) in eastern Assam. Bhut jolokia is a chili pepper that is native to Northeast India, particularly Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland.

“Human-elephant conflict in Tinsukia, often arises due to shrinkage of elephant habitats. The clash results in damage to crops and property, posing risks to both humans and elephants. Multifaceted efforts are required to mitigate this conflict and ensure coexistence through measures like elephant corridors, habitat protection and restoration, awareness programmes, implementation of alternative crops, seasonal solar fence to protect crops, solar fences to protect people’s lives and properties etc.,” says Aaranyak in a press statement.

The training was conducted in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra Tinsukia, wherein, subject matter expert Dr Sarodee Boruah imparted knowledge to 19 villagers from four nearby villages, focusing mainly on pest control management on March 1. Aaranyak which is actively working to mitigate the human elephant conflict in northeast India and Assam, has been brainstorming and implementing various measures to safeguard conflict affected people, their crops and their property, as well as the conservation of threatened Asian elephants in the area. In addition to Bhut Jolokia, Aaranyak informed, the training included cultivation of Assam Lemon (Kaji Nemu) plantations as well.

Assam Lemon plantations also act as bio fences, when cultivated in a particular manner. This is a tried and tested tool to mitigate HEC which in turn, also helps in people earn an additional income by selling the fruit (lemon) in the market.

The Govt of Assam recently declared Assam's this unique lemon variety, Kaji Nemu, as the state fruit. Known for its aroma, flavour and health benefits, Kaji Nemu has already got the GI tag.

“We have partnered with local villagers and extended partial support with lemon saplings. The training was followed by a pre-post evaluation to understand the knowledge gained by the trainees which was conducted through a questionnaire. Trainees also received hands-on demonstrations on the plantation process and a better understanding of harvesting season and market prospects to encourage them to augment their income level. This was followed by lemon sapling distribution to our beneficiaries,” says Aaranyak

Aaranyak's officials Bidisha Borah, Tonmoy Priya Gogoi, Debajit Gogoi, and Jiaur Rahman facilitated the training.

***Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
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