

Tea planters apprehending heavy and long term yield loss

SILIGURI: Tea planters are apprehending heavy and long term yield loss caused by serious health problem of tea bushes taking place due to ongoing heavy spell of downpour in entire West Bengal and North Eastern Region tea belt.

According to the Meteorological department statistics, cumulative rainfall since the beginning of Monsoon season on the 1st of June in entire West Bengal tea belt has been recorded as around 20% higher than normal. But the downpour during last week went up to 50%. The situation is even worse in Sikkim adjoining Darjeeling hills or many North east Region areas where rainfall has been recorded around 100% higher than normal during last week.

Owing to the situation, Tea Association of India Secretary General P. K. Bhattacharjee, apprehends the production at many tea producing zones to come down by 25% in the month of July.

But, as even higher level of concern, "The damages occurring to tea bushes now, will impart its ill-effect in post monsoon seasons too," said Eminent Tea Scientist. Dr. S. E. Kabeer.

"Continuous and prolonged lack of sunshine is lowering photosynthesis, the food producing mechanism of plants. In addition, roots of bushes are now suffocating without proper aeration due to soil oversaturated with water. Naturally, tea bushes are getting highly deprived of nutrients and thus growth," he said.

But more importantly, "New roots to touch wider and deeper area soil layers are not growing. This will drastically reduce mineral and water suction. An additional and major crisis is Violet Root Rot disease that may cause severe damage to the bushes," explained Dr. Kabeer.

"All these put together will badly hamper production during next dry season after monsoon. After highly impaired production in last post winter season due to lack of rain, this second spell of yield loss due to heavy rain has become too difficult to absorb," said K K Mintri, Chairman of Terai Indian Planters Association.