



Preventing conflict

Apeejay Tea, the third largest tea producer in the country, and WWF-India joined hands to find lasting solutions to prevent and manage human-elephant conflict in the state of Assam by implementing a three-year, exhaustive management strategy in the most affected elephant landscapes of the state. The first phase of work of this alliance will commence immediately in Sonitpur district, where the human and elephant mortality levels were the highest recorded in the country. The method it will adopt includes use of captive elephants to drive wild elephants from the fields and tea estates, training anti-depredation squads to facilitate elephant drives and empowering the local community. Also, the route used by the elephant will be formalised as a movement corridor and hedged by a bio fence instead of electric fence. "By making this commitment, Apeejay Tea in partnership



with WWF-India, recognises the need to bring into action a sustainable plan to minimise and resolve human-elephant conflict in the tea gardens of Assam, a plan which can be easily replicated by other impacted tea estates. Our approach has been 'our home and theirs'. A sustainable co-existence strategy was needed as the forest habitats of elephants have depleted rapidly and more and more animals have sought shelter in our estates," says Apeejay Tea managing director **A.K. Bhargava**. The company owns 17 tea estates in the prime tea growing areas of Assam spread over 50,000 acres. WWF-India has been actively working on elephant conservation and human-elephant conflict management in the Sonitpur district since 2004, along with the government of Assam, community groups and a civil society organisation called District Community Development Programme. ♦