

Bio-fences to ward off straying elephants in Assam

To replace electric fencing that are hazardous to jumbos

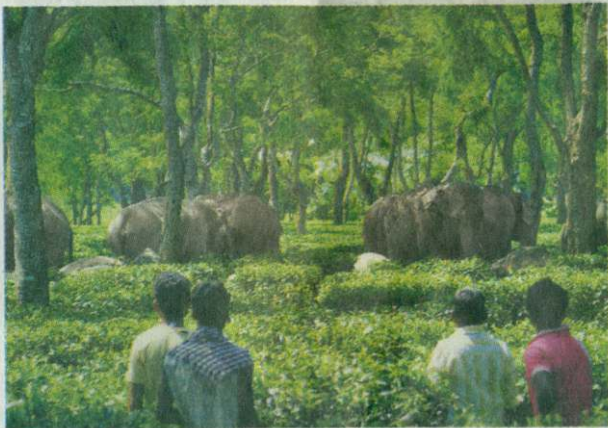
Indrani Dutta

KOLKATA: In a bid to reduce man-animal conflict in Assam, bio-fences are proposed to be set up replacing electric fences, to ward off straying elephants.

To start with four tea estates in Assam will have these "bio-fenced" with thickets of thorny bamboos. The nurseries for growing the thorny bamboo will be inside the Apeejay Tea estates in Assam's Sonitpur district. Electric fencing is considered costly and unreliable besides being hazardous.

This would be part of a partnership to manage man-elephant conflict under a tie-up between Apeejay Tea and the World Wildlife Fund.

WWF India CEO, Ravi Singh said: "The unprecedented fragmentation of elephant habitats has isolated resident wild elephants leading to an increase in conflict." He felt that the partnership had the poten-



People come face to face with a herd of elephants at a tea garden in Sonitpur district of Assam.

— FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

tial to become a model in this region.

Apeejay Tea's managing director Ashok Bhargava said the route used by elephants in their Sessa Tea Estate to reach the other part of forest would be formalised as an elephant movement corridor. The tea company, among India's oldest has four tea estates in a hot zone for

elephant movement. During the three-year-project period they plan to raise 40,000 saplings of the bamboo which would be later on planted in parts of the tea garden. Under the project, they will also develop a matrix to calculate the quantum of loss that is usually borne by the tea estates on account of damage to property.