



Tea India

2022-2023

Editorspeak

TWENTY TWENTY TWO was a year of Challenges and opportunities amidst soaring cost of production, stagnant prices, modest exports levels, climate change adversities and the Indian Tea Industry had to be on its toes to cope with these challenges. Production in India despite early closure increased by 22 Mkgs in 2022. Globally, the growth in production was 27 Mkgs. All these were instrumental in contributing to the Industry's struggle for a fair price discovery. Increase in wages in all regions and their impact on the industry's viability was visible. Nevertheless, the resilience of the industry helped in keeping it afloat.

Considering the enormity of the challenges confronting the tea industry, particularly in Darjeeling, the ITA Secretariat has prepared and submitted a detailed paper highlighting the areas where the WB Government needs to intervene and help in cost mitigation for the industry. In Assam, the proactive approach of the State Government by continuation of ATISIS Scheme upto 2027 is a glaring example of the Government's deep sensitivity and aid to the industry in overcoming the crisis at hand. In West Bengal, a similar approach by the state Government would be of great help to the industry.

The volume of Indian tea export at 231 kg last year vs 197 Mkg in 2021, gives the hope to target 300 Mkg in the next three to four years. While domestic consumption is growing, boosting exports is crucial for stability in the domestic market. The industry's efforts and brainstorming on how to improve further on the export front continues and to that effect delegations to our traditional and non-traditional export markets overseas are necessary as early as possible.

The Association's Sustainability Cell continues its onward march and efforts to enlarge the scope of UNICEF activities in West Bengal tea gardens is about to bear fruit. The focus on women and children in the form of ensuring their empowerment, safety and wellbeing will help to improve their quality of life and livelihood. Our Association with Solidaridad Asia towards furthering the interests of the small growers of both Assam and West Bengal will continue to be within our principal focus.

The Industry has been alive to the serious concerns regarding Climate Change. Several R&D initiatives to develop Climate change resistant clones and water management practices through modernization of cold weather irrigation techniques have been accorded the deserved priority.

As the industry braces itself to confront the challenges in the road ahead, the Association remains committed to continuing with its dedicated service towards the Industry's growth and progress.

Office Bearers of ITA

2022-23



Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri
Chairperson



Mr. Atul Asthana
Vice Chairman



Mr. Hemant Bangur
Addl. Vice Chairman

139th AGM of ITA

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) held its 139th Annual General Meeting on 10th November, 2023 at the Taj Bengal hotel, Kolkata.

Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, The Chairperson in her address at the 139th AGM of ITA lauded the pro-active roles of the Central and State Governments by way of their actions to progress the agenda of growth and advancement. She commended the Hon'ble Finance Minister, GoI for speeding up the process of improvement of banking infrastructure in tea gardens areas which enables gradual transition to digital payment of worker's wages. She flagged several issues regulating intervention of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India:

- Inclusion of power and fuel, including Natural Gas under the purview of GST
- Enhancement of working capital limit for tea gardens to tide over the liquidity crunch
- Interest subvention @3% on working capital loan
- Inclusion of Tea Sector under the purview of MSME Schemes

Other key issues which featured in her speech were:

- Strengthening of the import inspection regime to prevent influx of low-quality teas into the country;
- Need for creation of a dedicated fund by the Government for scaling up of tea promotional campaigns - both domestic and overseas;
- Support of the Central Government for restoration of Tea Board's Orthodox Subsidy Scheme in order to boost export;
- A fiscal revival package for the Darjeeling tea sector;
- Requirement of changes in the Code on Wages allowing full adjustment of in-kind benefits while computing Wages.
- Need for a wider basket of approved pesticides with realistic Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs).
- Institutionalizing of Government welfare schemes for tea garden workers would mitigate employer's costs and would



Chairperson's Address - 139th AGM

also benefit workers.

- Adoption of new technology such as solar power is gaining momentum.
- The ITA is focused on workforce nutrition through its joint pilot programme with the Global Alliance on Improved Nutrition (GAIN).
- In West Bengal a new dimension on Corporate Social Responsibility has been added with the Prevention of Child trafficking initiative under the ITA - UNICEF project. The Govt. of West Bengal has supported and encouraged the engagement.

- The TRINITEA program in partnership with Solidaridad has further strengthened the small holder initiative in West Bengal and Assam. More than 75,000 small tea growers have been covered so far under Trinitea program in Assam and West Bengal. Emphasis continues to be laid on good agricultural practices and harvest of quality leaf.

Dr. V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Adviser, Govt. of India, was the Chief Guest whose address and presentation was beamed during the Open Session. Mr. Saurav Pahari, IAS, Chairman, Tea Board, the Guest of Honour dwelt upon the various issues confronting the tea industry.



Chief Guest Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran's online presentation



Saurav Pahari, Dy. Chairman, Tea Board addressing the 139th AGM



S. K. Acharya, Vice Chairman ITA delivering the vote of thanks

Asia Tea Alliance (ATA)



The Asia Tea Alliance under the aegis of Solidaridad Asia comprises organizations of top tea producing, consuming and exporting countries of Asia to promote the common interests of teas worldwide. Asia Tea Alliance countries entered into a MoU in April 2019 to strengthen financial and sustainable development of the tea sector. During the tenure of Mr. Wang Qing from China, the first Chairman of the Asia Tea Alliance, a MOU was reached between the Core participating industry bodies which included ITA. Solidaridad Asia being sustainability partner of the ATA facilitated a high powered Core Group to develop and have a clear road map against set milestones. The original Core Group consisted of India (Indian Tea Association), China (China Tea Marketing Association), Sri Lanka (Sri Lankan Tea Board), Indonesia (Indonesian Tea Marketing Association) and Japan (Central Tea Association). The Core Group agreed on strengthening financial trade promotion, technology exchange and promote sustainable development of the tea sector by jointly organizing seminars and conferences on conservation of eco system and product safety. It was decided that the Core Group would meet once a year to discuss various issues as stated above.



ATA Meeting at Taj Bengal, Kolkata on 10th November 2022.
(L-R) : Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay, Mr Arijit Raha.....

On Mr. Wang Qing demitting office; the Core Group unanimously elected Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson ITA as the Chairperson of Asia Tea Alliance. The Core Group met on 10th November, 2023 at Taj Bengal, Kolkata and inducted two other producing countries viz. Nepal and Bangladesh into the ATA.

Mr. Wang Qing, the outgoing chairman of the Asia Tea Alliance in his opening remarks highlighted the impact of having the Asia Tea Alliance and endorsed his commitment to uphold the interest of the Asia Tea Alliance. In the meeting held on 10th November 2022, the ATA Core Group discussed on the ways and means for sharing of information of common interest with all the members. The following proposals were unanimously agreed upon and signed at the ATA 2023 meeting held on 10th November 2023:

1. Promote National Sustainability Standards and UN SDGs: Strengthening and promoting economically viable production and trade of sustainable black and green tea adhering to national laws and relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Protect the Interest of All Tea Producers : Initiating joint research and making policy recommendations towards



Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, elected as Chairperson, ATA

safeguarding the economic and business interests of the small- and big tea-producing organisations and creating a level-playing field for the producers.

3. Tackle Climate Change: Generating resources for improvement in education, awareness, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning in the tea-producing countries.
4. Initiate Fair Carbon Farming Programme: Rendering active support towards the carbon farming programmes in the tea sector for promoting a practical and economically feasible carbon verification system that would ensure fair payment for ecosystem services provided by the tea producers
5. Advocate for a Fair Share of Value: Promoting a fair share of value to producers in the tea supply chain that would benefit all actors and help enhancing the tea industry's

social and environmental practices while bringing in efficiency and quality

6. Facilitate Transparency and Traceability: Providing technical and operational support to the members towards making the tea supply chain more transparent through digital solutions, platforms, and other sharing solutions for an inclusive Farm Data Ecosystem based on open-source technology and making it easily accessible to all interested members for participation
7. Increase Consumption of Sustainable Tea: Organizing joint events and enhancing consumer awareness towards rendering support the increase in consumption of sustainable green and black tea
8. Joint Database: Developing and publishing an Asia Tea Alliance digest every two years, compiling statistics, research work and other information from the member countries pertaining to sustainable tea production and consumption

Asia Tea Alliance Meet in Bandung, Indonesia: 23rd - 25th August, 2023

Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri Chairperson, Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman and Mr. Arijit Raha Secretary General, ITA attended the Asia Tea Alliance(ATA) Meet in Bandung, Indonesia organised by Solidaridad Asia over 23rd to 25th August, 2023.

Indonesia Tea Board, UPASI, CISTA amongst others also joined the Alliance that aims to strengthen mutually beneficial ties among Alliance partners.



Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri- Chairperson, ITA & Asia Tea Alliance addressing at the Asia Tea Alliance meet at Bandung, Indonesia.



At the ATA Meet, Bandung



Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman, ITA addressing at the #AsiaTeaAlliance meet at Bandung, Indonesia.



India International Small Tea Growers Convention in Kolkata (IISTGC)

The first India International Small Tea Growers Convention, jointly organised by Solidaridad and ITA, was held on 11th November 2022 at Taj Bengal Kolkata. The Purpose of the convention was to highlight the numerous challenges faced by the Small Tea Growers in tackling economic sustainability, adversities faced due to climate change and other management difficulties. The conference was attended by more than 150 participants from across India and several other countries, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China (online), Indonesia, and Nepal.



Mr. Arijit Raha making a presentation



Ceremonial lighting of lamp

Shri. Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Union Minister Industries & Commerce recorded Address was played at the the Inaugural Session of IISTGC. He Lauded the wide varieties of Indian Tea and advised to make inroads in world markets.

Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma, Hon'ble CM, Assam and Smt. Mamata Banerjee, Hon'ble CM West Bengal extended messages of good wishes for the IISTGC.

An exhibition of products of small growers was inaugurated by Shri Moloy Ghatak, Hon'ble Labour Minister of West Bengal.

Speaking on the occasion Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA stated, that the tea industry was adversely impacted by factors that are detrimental to economic sustainability of the tea industry. The growing effects of climate change, price stagnation, high input cost bear adversely on cost of production. The Chairperson remarked that - "the ITA-Solidaridad partnership has been working on and bringing about a holistic development of the tea industry by way of overall improvement in the livelihoods of STGs - is commendable."

Thanking the Chairperson ITA, Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay MD Solidaridad stated that over a million small tea growers in India and from other countries depend on the tea industry for their existence. The tea business is critical to rural livelihood as well as the economy of the producing countries. Promoting long-term health, wellbeing, and environmental sustainability in the tea business should be a top priority, but the sectors facing a crisis because of persistently low tea prices, which are also crushing the small tea farmers. Hence Solidaridad and ITA aim to empower the farmers to turn their business into a purpose-driven brands.

Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General,ITA, talked about the importance of the Trinitea Programme as well as the various challenges and the current state of sustainability and the Indian Tea Industry.

Experts from the tea industry deliberated on the challenges faced by the small tea growers and discussed solutions that can address the sustainability issues in the tea Industry. The highlight of the event was a display on innovation in sustainable tea production and consumption, which can empower smallholders. This included Soli Trace, a QR code technology that facilitates direct communication between consumers and producers, Soli Probe, an instant soil analyser, Soli Met, a hyper-local weather station, and Ballotronix, an instant tea leaf reader.



The Inaugural session

Assam Tea Industries Special Incentive Scheme (ATISIS)

ATISIS, a result of ITA's persistent engagements with the Government of Assam, was launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on July 4, 2021, as an endeavor to boost the production of orthodox /specialty tea in the state of Assam by giving incentives to tea gardens.

The Scheme comprises the following -

- Interest subvention on working capital loan
- orthodox tea incentive
- exemption from Agricultural income tax
- subsidy on orthodox and specialty tea machinery

The Association had been proactively engaging with the Finance



Chairperson presenting a ITA Publication to Hon'ble CM, Assam

Department, and the Industries Department, Government of Assam for enhancement and extension of benefits under the ATISIS Scheme in order to secure the best interests of the tea industry.

- Enhancement of orthodox incentives by the Assam government from Rs 7 to 10 and then to Rs 12 per kg for the year 2022 exclusively, that year being the 200th year of tea in Assam.
- Orthodox tea incentive Scheme extended for a period of five years, i.e. till end of FY 2027-28. In case of Agricultural Income Tax Holiday, a further extension granted for another three years i.e. 2022-23 to 2024-25.

International Womens Day 2023

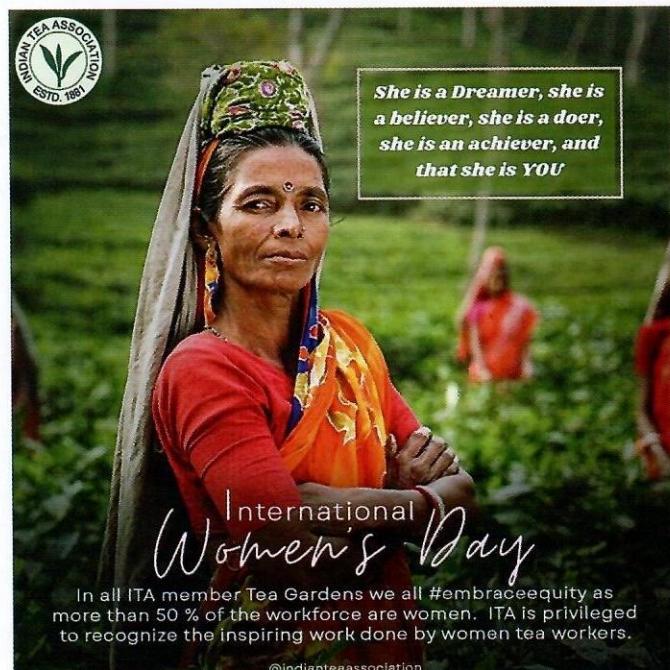
The ITA, for the second successive year, celebrated women's achievements and organized a Webinar with the lady medical staff members in Assam and West Bengal tea gardens on the occasion of International Women's Day 2023.

Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA, in her speech, recognizing the inspiring contribution of women in the society, stated that in tea gardens more than 50 % of the workforces are women who contribute immensely on various front including upkeep of family health. Ms. Palchoudhuri also expressed appreciation to all the lady medical staff for their immense contribution to ensure that tea population was kept safe from COVID. The Chairperson requested all Managers to share gesture of appreciation with all lady medical personnel on duty on the day of "International Women's Day"



International Women's Day - Webinar in progress

As a token of appreciation a Certificate was presented to each Tea Estate underlining the services of lady medical personnel in Tea gardens by highlighting the phrase #Embrace equality.



International Women's Day

In all ITA member Tea Gardens we all #embrace equality as more than 50 % of the workforce are women. ITA is privileged to recognize the inspiring work done by women tea workers.

@indiateaassociation

A large no. of participants from Mothers Clubs of various gardens attended the Webinar which was also addressed by Mr. A. Raha, Secretary General and Mr. S. Ghosh, Secretary, (Sustainability), ITA.

Har Ghar Tiranga - Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

On the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence, ITA Headquarter and Branches celebrated the day with Tiranga and took part in the Government's Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign from 13th to 15th August 2022. All Tea factories and estates under ITA membership also celebrated the day in a big way.



ITA thanks to the Ministry of Culture, GoI for the Certificate of Appreciation for pinning the Indian Flag

Indus Food

Indus Food 2023, organised by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), held at the Hitex City in Hyderabad from 8th to 10th January 2023. ITA was invited by TPCI to participate at the Indus Food 2023 to promote Indian Tea to the overseas buyers.

Teas from various regions of India like - Darjeeling, Assam, Cachar, Dooars, Terai and Tripura were in display at the ITA stall. Buyers from Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, etc visited the ITA stall at Indus Food and interacted with the ITA officials. ITA also took part at the Buyer Seller Meets organized by TPCI during the Indus Food 2023.



Indus Food - ITA Pavillion



Indus Food - Interaction with Overseas Buyers

International Tea Day 2022

The Tea Board in collaboration with ITA jointly organized a seminar to observe the International Tea Day on hybrid mode on 21st May, 2022 at the Williamson Magor Hall, Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCC&I) premises.

At the Inaugural Session, Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA & CCPA delivered the Welcome Address followed by Mr. Saurav Pahari, IAS, Deputy Chairman Tea Board. Dr. K N Raghavan, IRS - Past Chairman, Tea Board and Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay, MD, Solidaridad Asia participated online.

Ms. Anupriya Patel, Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India also graced the occasion and addressed the gathering online. She commended Tea Board and ITA for the befitting observance of International Tea Day.

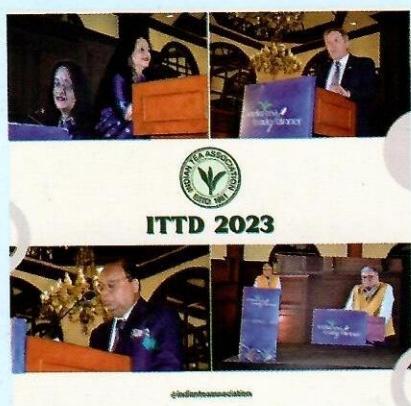
A large no. of participants heard Indian & Global experts in 3 absorbing Sessions covering crucial issues relevant to the wide array of sustainability challenges that the tea industry encounters in its day to day operations. Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman ITA moderated the first session in which the sustainability challenges and the business case for certification in the tea sector were deliberated amidst panel discussions. In the second session moderated by Dr. Krishna Gupta, IAS, Principal Secretary, Dept. of Technical Education, Training & Skill Development, Govt. of West Bengal the way forward for domestic tea promotion and challenges in marketing of tea were covered through presentations made by senior functionaries in the tea sector. The third session which was exclusively for small tea growers had the participation of STG representatives from West Bengal and Assam who shared their experiences on the challenges they face on various fronts. Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay of Solidaridad Asia made a presentation online highlighting the activities under the TRINITEA programme which is a joint initiative of ITA and Solidaridad Asia for small holders.

Mr. Hemant Bangur, Addl. Vice Chairman, ITA delivered the Vote of Thanks appreciating the good participation of stakeholders in the event.



Glimpses of the event

India Tea Trade Dinner 2023



The 14th edition of the India Tea Trade Dinner (ITTD) was organized on Thursday, 20th April 2023 at Taj Bengal Hotel, Kolkata from 6:00 PM onwards.

The event was held under the aegis of India Tea Trade Dinner Committee headed by Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, Indian Tea Association and members drawn from the key segments of the industry.

This year the Guest of Honour Ms. Melinda M. Pavek, Consul General of the US was physically indisposed, and thus represented by Mr. Adrian Pratt, Director, American Centre represented the Consul General at the ITTD.

Stakeholders across India and overseas and representatives from the Government as well as civil Society participated in the ITTD event.



WEBINAR on Solar Power

In order to facilitate sharing of knowledge on the use of solar power and the knowhow for its adoption, the ITA organized a webinar on the potential and applicability of solar power in tea estates on 16th March 2022 at 3 pm.

Opening remarks and Inaugural Address were offered by Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA and Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA respectively.

Shri S. Suresh Kumar, IAS, Addl Chief Secretary, Power Department, Govt of WB addressed the participants at the webinar.

Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. S P Gon Chaudhuri, Chairman, N B Institute of Rural Technology.

Power point presentations were made by the following:

- Mr. Tapas Das, Addl. Chief Engineer & Mr. Utpal Goswami,

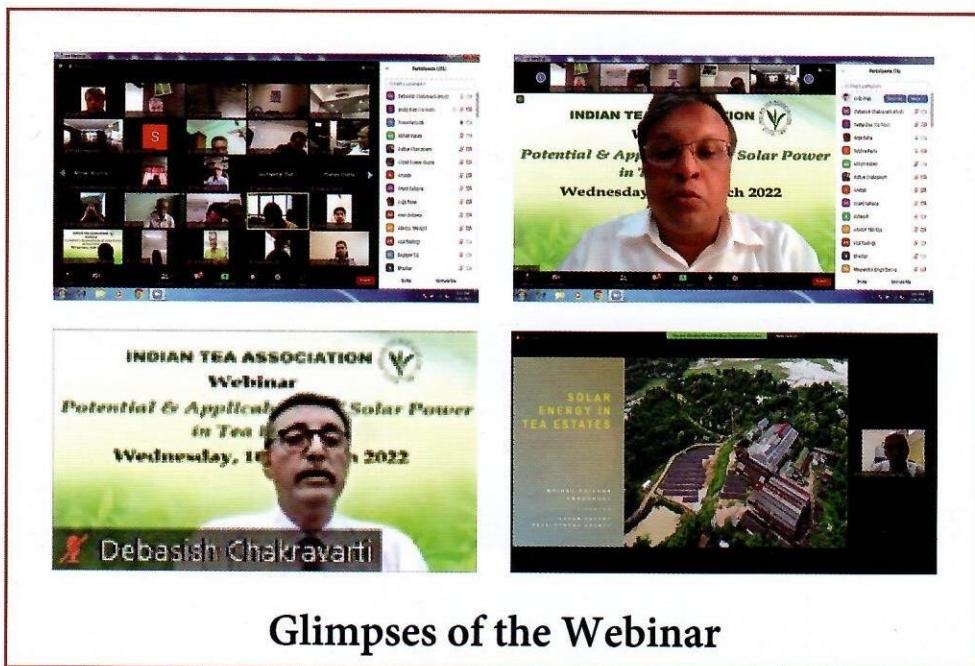
Consultant ,West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited.

- Mr. Mrinal Krishna Chaudhury, Director, Assam Energy Development Agency,
- Mr. P C Rauth, Superintending Engineer, West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency.

Two Solar solution provider companies namely, M/s Roofsol Energy and M/s KSL Cleantech Ltd were also present at the webinar and explained about the installation criteria, procedure, etc to the participants.

The webinar attracted massive participation and appreciation from the stakeholders.

The Webinar was moderated by Mr. Debasish Chakravarti, Secretary, ITA along with active involvement of Team ITA.



Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS)

The Government of West Bengal organized a B2B Trade Exhibition at Science City Mela Ground, Kolkata over 20th to 24th April 2022 on the occasion of Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS).

ITA participated with members to showcase Bengal Teas from Darjeeling, Dooars & Terai at the BGBS Exhibition organised at Science City, Kolkata.

The summit was attended by 4,300 participants from 42 countries, including private investors and foreign dignitaries. The ITA booth at the BGBS Exhibition also had huge footfall of visitors on all three days of the summit.



ITA Stall at the BGBS - Glimpses



2nd World Black Tea Quality Evaluation Competition

The China Tea Marketing Association (CTMA) organized the "2nd World Black Tea Quality Evaluation Competition" in Fu'an City, Fujian Province, China over 20th to 21st September 2022.

Indian Tea Association, on being requested by the CTMA, participated at the "2nd World Black Tea Quality Evaluation Competition" being held amongst members of the Asia Tea Alliance.

As per the format of the Competition, following four categories of samples received from ITA member gardens till 14th September 2022 was evaluated by a panel of senior tea tasters

and ITA Secretariat at J Thomas & Co. Pvt Ltd on Thursday, 15th September, 2022 as per the 3-parameters (Appearance (Shape), Liquor (Brightness, Body, Flavour, Aroma) and Infused Leaf (Brightness, Nose).

- Assam - Orthodox Whole Leaf
- Assam - CTC PF
- Dooars & Terai - CTC PF
- Darjeeling - Whole Leaf

Awards / Certificates were presented by CTMA to the following winners:

	Grand Gold (GG)	Gold	Silver
Darjeeling - Orthodox Whole Leaf	Margerets Hope T.E of Amgoorie India Ltd.	Thurbo T.E of Goodricke Group Limited	Badamtam T.E of Goodricke Group Limited
Dooars - CTC PF	Nuxalbari T.E of Nuxalbari Tea Company Pvt. Ltd.	Chulsa T.E of Goodricke Group Limited	Jiti T.E of Goodricke Group Limited
Assam - CTC PF	Kharikatia T.E of Rossell Tea (Division of Rossell India Ltd)	Doomurdullung T.E of Assam Eompany India Limited	Nahorhabi T.E of Jayshree Tea & Industries Ltd.
Assam - Orthodox Whole Leaf	Kolony T.E of Kolony Tea Estate Pvt. Ltd.	Dejoo T.E of Stewart Holl (India) Ltd.	Greenwood T.E of Assam Company India Ltd

Increase of the Incentive Cap under Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Product (RODTEP)

ITA had commissioned a Study in 2020 for ascertaining the costs incurred by tea producers/exporters by way of cess, duties etc on exported tea in the context of the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Product (RODTEP) Scheme.

The Government of India vide Notification dated 17.08.2021 had fixed the applicable RODTEP rate for Tea at 1% of F.O.B in all cases except Black Tea - Leaf/Dust in Bulk which was set at 1.7% of F.O.B subject to a cap of Rs 3.60 per UQC (kg).

Pursuant to the Government Notification, the Association made several representations to the Commerce Ministry submitting that the applicable RODTEP Rates were not adequate to cover the State Levies/Duties being borne by tea producers/exporters and requested for enhancement of the incentive rates to at least 6%.

The Association thereafter commissioned another Study on RODTEP in December, 2021 and submitted the Report to Tea Board. As per the fresh Study, the actual cost of embedded taxes for tea manufacturer exporters worked out to 5.91%.

Subsequently, the Hon'ble Commerce and the Hon'ble Finance Minister increased the incentive cap under RoDTEP from Rs. 3.6 to Rs. 6.7 per kg. The Rates have been made applicable for exports made from 16.01.2023 to 30.09.2023.



Interaction with MEA, RPO Officers

An interaction with Mr Sandeep Chakravorty, IFS, JS (Europe West) Ministry of External Affairs and Mr Ashis Middha, IFS, Regional Passport Officer, Kolkata & Director, Ministry of External Affairs and Tea Board Officials was arranged by ITA on 23rd May 2023 at the BCCI premises.

The meeting discussed on how to increase tea exports to UK, EU & other countries and address Non Tariff Barriers



Meeting with GIZ

A meeting was arranged at the BCC&I premises with officials of GIZ India Ltd officials on 1st February 2023 to explore supply chain sustainability collaborative initiatives. The meeting was also attended by, Tea Board officials and industry stakeholders.



Interaction with the Norwegian Ambassador to India

A delegation led by H.E. Mr. Hans Jacob Frydenlund, Norwegian Ambassador to India visited ITA office on 19th April 2022. Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA interacted on opportunities of tea exports to Norway. A presentation on Indian Tea Industry was made by Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General.



Meeting with the United States Government Representatives

A team from the United States Government represented by Ms Nadia Al-Dayel, Division Chief, Research & Policy Unit, Ms Rachel Raba, Senior Policy Coordinator, Ms Sadikshyanepal, International Relations Specialist, Mr. A Sukesh, Senior Advisor On Labour And Political Affairs At The U.S. Embassy & US Embassy Coordinator visited the ITA office on 7/11/2022 to discuss on media report alleging Forced Labour. By a presentation, Mr. A Raha, Secretary General refuted the allegations clarifying that there is no forced or child labour in ITA member gardens.

IAS, Principal Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Labour Welfare Department, Dr. Lakshmanan S., IAS Secretary to the Government of Assam Industries, Commerce & PE Department, Assam also visited ITA for discussions on labour related issues.



Visit of officials from Labour Dept. Govt. of Assam to study and discuss on the ration and Wage related matters of West Bengal



Smt. Anamika Tiwari, ACS, Labour Commissioner, Smt. Ishanu Shah, Chief inspector of plantations, Assam and team visited the ITA office to study and discuss on the ration issue. Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, Mr. Debasish Chakravarti, Secretary, ITA participated in the discussion.

Union Budget 2023-24 : Highlights

The Hon'ble Union Minister for Finance Ms Nirmala Sitharaman placed the Union Budget 2023-24 on 1st February, 2023. The key announcements were as follows :

a) General

The Union Budget 2023-24 prioritises seven principles :

- a. Inclusive development
- b. Reaching the last mile
- c. Infrastructure & investment
- d. Unleashing the potential
- e. Green growth
- f. Youth Power
- g. Financial sector

Capital Expenditure increased by 33% to Rs 10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3% of GDP.

b) Agriculture

- An Agriculture Accelerator Fund will be set up to encourage agri-startups by young entrepreneurs;
- PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth" (PM-PRANAM) to be launched to incentivize States and Union Territories to promote alternative fertilizers and balanced use of chemical fertilizers;
- Digital public infrastructure to be developed for the agriculture sector;
- Agricultural credit target to be increased to Rs 20 lakh crore with a focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries;
- One crore farmers will get assistance to adopt natural farming. 10,000 bio input resource centres to be set up over the next three years;
- Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program with an outlay of Rs. 2200 crore to be launched to boost availability of disease-free, quality planting material for high value horticultural crops.

c) Skill Development

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, to be launched to skill youths within the next three years covering new age courses for Industry 4.0 like coding, AI, robotics, mechatronics, IOT, 3D printing, drones, and soft skills;
- 30 Skill India International Centres to be set up across different States to skill youth for international opportunities.

d) Social Issues

- Pradhan Mantri Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Group (PMPVTGS) mission to be launched to improve socio-economic condition. Rs 15,000 crore to be made available to implement the scheme in next three years;
- 157 new nursing colleges to be established in co-location with the existing 157 medical colleges established since 2014;
- Ekavaya Model Residential Schools to be set up in the next three years;
- Government to recruit 38,800 teachers and support staff for 740 schools serving 3.5 lakh tribal students;
- Sickle Cell Anaemia elimination Mission to be launched;
- Outlay for PM Awas Yojana enhanced 66% to over Rs 79,000 crore;
- Free food grain to be supplied to all Antyodaya and priority households for one year under PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana effective from 1st January, 2023.

e) Infrastructure

- 50 additional airports, helipads, water aero drones, advanced landing grounds will be revived to improve regional air connectivity;
- An outlay of Rs 2.4 lakh crore provided for railways in FY24;
- Centre to continue 50-year interest-free loan to state governments for one more year to incentivize infrastructure investment;
- Govt to spend Rs 10,000 crore per year for urban infra development fund;
- Cities to be incentivised to improve creditworthiness for municipal bonds;
- Aim for 100% mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers in all cities and towns.

f) Digitization

- Three specialized AI centres to be set up in educational institutions;
- National Data Governance Policy to be introduced;
- Scope of services in DigiLocker to be expanded;



Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman Hon'ble Finance Minister, GOI

- 100 labs for developing applications to use 5G services to be set up in engineering institutions;
- Labs will cover smart classrooms, precision farming, and healthcare applications;
- Phase 3 of E-courts projects to be launched with outlay of Rs 7,000 crore;
- One stop solution for reconciliation and updating identity maintained by various agencies to be established using digi locker and Aadhaar as foundational identity;
- Central Processing Centre to be set up for faster response to companies filing forms under Companies Act;

- PAN will be common identifier for all digital systems of govt agencies.

g) Green Growth

- Annual production of 5 MMT under Green Hydrogen Mission to be targeted by 2030 to facilitate transition of the economy to low carbon intensity and to reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports;
- 35000 crore outlay for energy security, energy transition and net zero objectives. Battery energy storage systems to be promoted;
- 20,700 crore outlay provided for renewable energy grid integration and evacuation from Ladakh;
- Green Credit Programme to be notified under the Environment (Protection) Act to incentivize and mobilize additional resources for environmentally sustainable and responsive actions;
- Amrit Dharohar scheme to be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.

h) Tourism

- Promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode with active participation of states, the convergence of Govt programs & public-private partnerships;
- 50 tourist destinations will be selected through challenge mode to be developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism;
- States to be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall for promotion and sale of their own and also all others states' ODOPs (One District, One Product), GI products and handicrafts.

i) Finance

- Revamped credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs to take effect from 1st April 2023 through infusion of Rs 9,000 crore in the corpus. This scheme would enable additional collateral-free guaranteed credit of Rs 2 lakh crore;
- Maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme to be enhanced to Rs 30 lakh from Rs 15 lakh;
- Monthly Income Scheme limit doubled to Rs 9 lakh and Rs 15 lakh for joint accounts;
- One-time new saving scheme Mahila Samman Saving Certificate for women to be made available for two years up to 2025.

j) Direct Taxes

- Rebate limit of personal income tax to be increased to Rs 7 lakh from the present Rs 5 lakh in the new tax regime;
- Proposal to extend the benefit of standard deduction of Rs. 50,000 to salaried individual, and deduction from family pension up to Rs. 15,000, in the new tax regime;
- Highest surcharge rate to reduce from 37% to 25% in the new tax regime;
- The limit for tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement of non-government salaried employees to increase to Rs. 25 lakh;
- The new income tax regime to be made the default tax regime. However, citizens will continue to have the option to avail the benefit of the old tax regime;
- New co-operatives that commence manufacturing activities till 31.3.2024 to get the benefit of a lower tax rate of 15% as presently available to new manufacturing companies;
- Date of incorporation for income tax benefits to start-ups to be extended from 31.03.2023 to 31.03.2024;
- Proposal to provide the benefit of carry forward of losses on change of shareholding of start-ups from seven years of incorporation to ten years;
- Deduction from capital gains on investment in residential house under sections 54 and 54F to be capped at Rs. 10 crore;

- Proposal to limit income tax exemption from proceeds of insurance policies with very high value. Where aggregate of premium for life insurance policies (other than ULIP) issued on or after 1st April, 2023 is above Rs. 5 lakh, income from only those policies with aggregate premium up to Rs. 5 lakh shall be exempt;
- Certain acts of omission of liquidators under section 276A of the Income Tax Act to be decriminalized with effect from 1st April, 2023;
- No tax for income up to Rs 3 lakh; 5% tax on Rs 3-6 lakh; highest tax rate of 30% on income above Rs 15 lakh under new Income Tax regime;
- Income from Market linked debentures to be taxed.

k) **Indirect Taxes:**

- Excise Duty exempted on GST-paid compressed bio-gas contained in blended compressed natural gas;
- Customs Act, 1962 to be amended to specify a time limit of nine months from date of filing application for passing final order by Settlement

Commission;

- Customs Duty exemption on specified capital goods/machinery for manufacture of lithium-ion cell for use in battery of electrically operated vehicle (EVs) extended to 31.03.2024;
- Basic customs duty on crude, glycerine is proposed to be reduced to 2.5%;
- Proposal to increase import duty on silver bars to align it with gold, platinum;
- Extension of customs duty cut on imports of parts of mobile phones by 1 year;
- To promote value addition in the manufacturing of TVs, customs duty on open cells of TV panels reduced to 2.5%;
- Input Tax Credit cannot be availed for such goods and services used for fulfilling CSR obligations.

Assam Budget - 2023-24 : Highlights

The Assam Budget 2023-24 was presented before the Assam Legislative Assembly on 16th March, 2023 by Smt. Ajanta Neog, Hon'ble Finance Minister, Government of Assam. Relevant highlights of the Budget were as follows :

1) Tea Industry Announcements

- The ITA in its Pre-Budget Memorandum 2023-24 to the Government of Assam had urged for continuation of the ATISIS to enable the tea sector to come out of the acute financial stress. In this regard, the Assam Budget 2023-24 provided as follows :
- Assam Tea Industries Special Incentives Scheme (ATISIS), 2020 to be further strengthened to incentivize the production of orthodox tea and specialty tea in Assam.
- For the year 2023-24 only, an enhanced production orthodox and specialty tea subsidy of Rs 12/- per kg will be provided. (The existing rate is Rs 10/- per kg).
- Extension of tax holiday on Agricultural Income Tax for a period of next three years.
- Proposal to organize road shows in major cities across the country as well as abroad to promote Assam Tea as a brand and showcase the rich socio-cultural heritage of tea garden communities.
- Infrastructure development of tea garden labour lines, especially the development of roads will be taken up by the Government.
- In order to improve the education infrastructure in tea garden areas, another 100 new Tea garden High schools will be taken up this year.

- Under "Wage Compensation Scheme for Pregnant Women of Tea Garden Areas of Assam", the compensation amount will be enhanced to Rs 15,000 from the existing Rs 12,000.
- Under Mukhya Mantri Awaas Yojana, 10,000 houses will be constructed in Tea Garden labour lines.
- As a special relief, all the arrear electricity dues of tea garden worker families living in labour lines will be waived off as a one-time measure.
- Construction of 500 Mahaprabhu Jagannath Community Hall cum Skill Centres will be taken up in prominent localities of tea gardens.

Smt. Ajanta Neog, Hon'ble FM, Assam

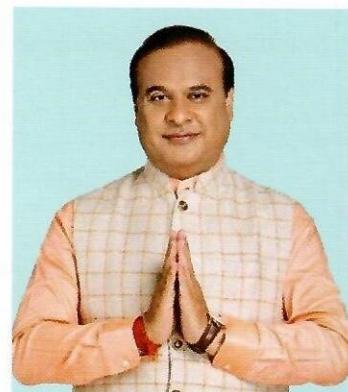
- Tea garden and Adivasi community will be recognized as a

separate sub-category within OBC. Around 3% reservation into Government jobs, within the OBC quota, will be considered for them, subject to fulfilling legal stipulations.

- The Directorate of Tea Tribes Welfare will be renamed as Directorate of Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare.
- A one-time cash grant of Rs 25,000/- will be provided to self-employed entrepreneurs belonging to the Tea Tribes Communities under the Swahid Dayal Das Panika Swaniyojon Achoni.

2) Other Announcements

- 40 lakh new beneficiaries under NFSA to be selected and new Ration Cards will be issued accordingly.
- To promote and incentivize the generation and consumption of green and clean energy, exemption will be provided from payment of electricity duty on generation of power from renewable sources for captive consumption for one year.
- Chief Minister's Green Initiative Incentive Scheme to be introduced as part of Assam's agenda in implementing India's strategy for combating climate change. Incentivization to be provided for private-led carbon sequestration initiatives.
- A Green Innovation Fund will be set up with a corpus of Rs 25 crore for promoting Research & Development Grants for Green Solutions and Alternatives Incubation Program in collaboration with state agencies (like Guwahati Biotech Park, Startup Assam).
- Assam's first 'Drink From Tap' (DFT) project proposed in Tezpur Town.
- Scheme to promote micro-entrepreneurs for creating self-employment opportunities among the un-employed youths belonging to BPL families and low-income households under Mukhya Mantri Sva-Niyojan Mission. A one-time Seed Capital of Rs 2 lakh in tranches will be provided to one lakh eligible persons.
- Mukhya Mantri Ayushman Asom Yojana launched which will enable 27 lakh additional families of the state to avail Rs 5 lakh worth of cashless treatment. To avoid duplicity, Atal Amrit Abhiyan will be discontinued.



Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Hon'ble CM, Assam entrepreneurs belonging to the Tea Tribes Communities under the Swahid Dayal Das Panika Swaniyojon Achoni.

West Bengal Budget - 2023-24 : Highlights

Smt. Chandrima Bhattacharya, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), Finance Department, Govt. of West Bengal presented the West Bengal Budget 2023-24 on 15th February, 2023. Some of the key Budget announcements were as follows:-

- The State Government favourably considered the Association's submission and granted exemption to the tea sector from payment of Rural Employment & Primary Education Cess. The exemption has been granted for two financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- The Association in its Pre-Budget Memorandum 2023-24 to the Government of West Bengal had urged for granting exemption to the tea sector from payment of Agricultural Income Tax which was favourably considered. The exemption was granted for two financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25.



Smt. Mamata Banerjee, Hon'ble CM, WB

on Stamp Duty and 10% rebate on circle rate of land/property extended for a period of another six months upto 30th September, 2023.



Smt. Chandrima Bhattacharya
Hon'ble FM, WB

The exemption was granted for two financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

- Under "Chaa Sundari" Housing Scheme, construction of 4022 single storied dwelling units in 17 sites covering 7 Tea Gardens in Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri was approved.
- The proposal of 2% rebate

- A project named "Rastashree" to be taken up for strengthening rural road connectivity.
- In order to provide relief to tax payers from pending litigations under the West Bengal Sales Tax Act, 1994, West Bengal Value Added Tax Act, 2003, Central Sales Tax Act, 1956, a comprehensive scheme for settlement of disputes proposed. Under the new scheme, all disputes pending before any authority as on 10th February, 2023 will be settled if application is made before 31st May, 2023.

Meeting with the Honourable Chief Minister of Assam



ITA delegation led by Vice Chairman Mr. Atul Asthana met the Honourable Chief Minister of Assam on 20th July 2023 to apprise him on current challenges

confronting the tea sector in Assam.

During the course of the meeting, a representation was handed over to the Hon'ble Assam Chief Minister. ITA's submissions included, amongst others, the following:

- Monetization of foodgrains provided by the management

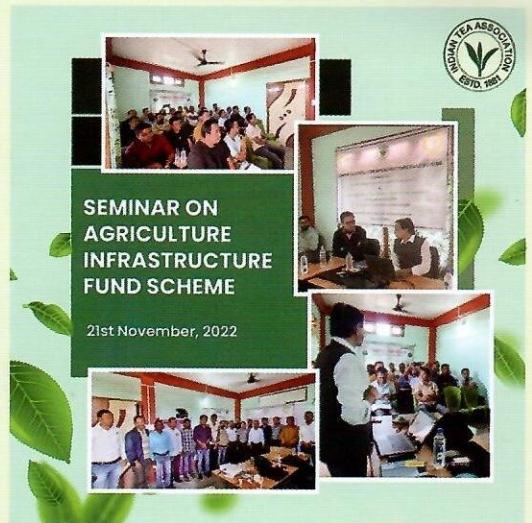
to the workers at the State Government notified rate of Rs 14.20 per day

- Clearance of pending subsidy claims under ATISIS
- Mitigation of high costs incurred by exporters for shipments made through ICD Amingaon
- Early implementation of the Export incentive of Rs 5/- per kg under the proposed Assam Tea Policy, 2022
- Brand Promotion of Assam Tea as envisaged in the proposed Assam Tea Policy, 2022
- Prioritization of the Tea Sector with regard to Distribution of Gas
- Power Supply improvement in Barak Valley

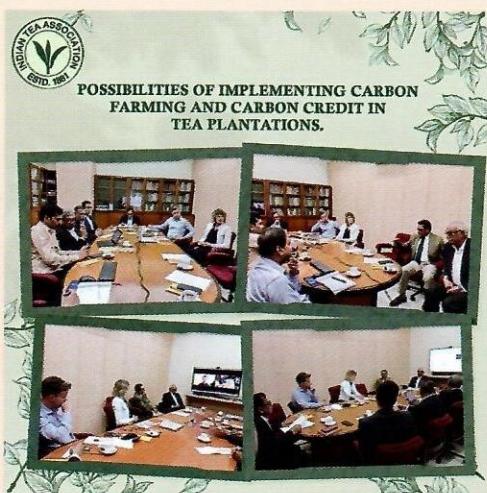
Seminar on Agriculture Infrastructure Fund Scheme

A seminar on Agriculture Infrastructure Fund Scheme was organized on 21st November 2022, by Zone 3 - Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association and All Bodoland Small Tea Growers' Association (ABSTGA), Dimakuchi in collaboration with ARIAS Society, Govt. of Assam at the Meeting Hall of ABSTGA, Dimakuchi.

The seminar was attended by around 30 Small Tea Growers, few Partners of Bought Leaf Factories, Solidaridad Executives and the Branch Manager, Central Bank of India, Dimakuchi Branch, all of whom actively participated in the seminar and showed a lot of interest in the aspects of the Scheme as briefed by the Sr. Policy Advisor, ARIAS Society, Govt. of Assam.



Discussion on Carbon Farming (ITA - Solidaridad)



Discussion on Carbon farming was held on 1st December 2022 at the ITA Conference hall with European and Indian representatives from Solidaridad on possibilities of implementing Carbon farming and carbon credit in tea plantations.

The discussions were an eye opener on benefits which tea plantations could reap through Carbon farming.

Free Eye Check up cum Spectacles Distribution Camps

Indian Tea Association (ITA) in collaboration with Rotary International, Vision RX and TBITA organized Free Eye Check-up cum Spectacles Distribution Camps for 4(four) days from 1st May, 2022 to 4th May, 2022 for Tea Gardens workers. More than 700 spectacles were distributed amongst the beneficiaries.

BRANCH BUZZ

132nd AGM of ABITA

The Assam Branch ITA held its 132nd AGM on 18th February, 2023 at Jorhat, Assam. The event was graced by Mr BK Chakravarthy, Principal Secy, Labour Dept, Assam and Mrs Arunita Phukan, ED Tea Board, Guwahati. Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA Chairperson while addressing the gathering at the 132nd AGM of ABITA at Jorhat stressed on the challenges being faced by Tea. Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman, Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, Mr. Abhijit Sharma, Secretary, ABITA, HQ were also present at the AGM.

The AGM was attended by a large number of tea planters from ABITA member gardens and representatives from other segments of the tea industry.



122nd AGM SVBITA

The 122nd Annual General Meeting of the Surma Valley Branch Indian Tea Association (SVBITA) was held at SVBITA Conference Room on 25th February, 2023.

The AGM was attended by Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA, Kolkata, Mr. A. Raha, Secretary General, ITA, Kolkata and several other distinguished personalities.

The Chairman of the Branch Mr. A. S. Brar placed the Branch activity report along with the challenges encountered by the Barak Valley Tea Industry to the gathering. Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri & Mr. A. Raha also addressed the gathering respectively and flagged challenges faced by the Tea Industry in general and intervention necessary to that effect.



BRANCH BUZZ

145th AGM of DBITA



The 145th AGM of DBITA was held at the Central Dooars Club, Binnaguri on 21st January, 2023.

Sunil Barthwal IAS, Commerce Secretary, Government of India graced the AGM as Chhieh Guest and in his address he stressed on the need for value addition & branding of Indian Teas for better price discovery. Shri. Saurav Pahari, Dy. Chairman, Tea Board also graced the occasion and addressed the gatherings.

Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhri, Chairperson, Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman, Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA and Mr. JC Pandey Chairman, DBITA also addressed the gathering.

The meeting dwelt on the challenges being faced by the Tea Sector of India.

Dignitaries across the tea fraternity, Govt. officials and planters from Dooars and Terai were present at the AGM.



61st AGM of TBITA

The 61ST AGM of TBITA was held on 20/01/2023 at the conference hall, TBITA, Bengdubi.

Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhri, Chairperson, Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman, Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA and Mr. S K Gupta, Chairman, TBITA addressed the gathering.



1st ANNUAL MEETING - DARJEELING INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION

Darjeeling Indian Tea Association held its First Annual Meeting on the 19th of January 2023 at the Mayfair Hotel Darjeeling.

Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhri, Chairperson, Mr. Atul Asthana, Vice Chairman, Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA attended the meeting.

Mr. Subroto Sen, Chairman, DITA spoke on the challenges confronting the Darjeeling Tea Sector. The meeting facilitated interactions between ITA officials and Darjeeling members on various matters of concern specific to Darjeeling.

Dignitaries across the tea fraternity, and planters from Darjeeling and Terai were present at the AGM.



ITA SUSTAINABILITY CELL

The ITA Sustainability Cell undertook several activities during the year 2022 & 2023.

During the years 2022 & 2023, several Workshops were held / Agreements were signed to carry out the sustainability agenda of the Association.

Following is a glimpse of the ITA Sustainability Cell work during 2022-23:

	Partnership	Remarks	Purpose
ITA - Solidaridad Partnership	Power of Voice - Programme on empowering small tea workers under the TRIINITEA Platform		To review activities up to 31st December 2021 and project activities for the period of four years (2022 to 2025) partnership.
	Trinitea Programme Committee Meeting held on 20th June 2022	An MoU was singed for a period of 4 years (2022 -2025) beginning 1st January 2022	Basic objective - • to Empower the Smallholder Tea Farmers and their Associations under the Reclaim Sustainability Programme • Progress of Trinitea since inception • Smart Agri Project in Assam • Map prepared by Quality Council of India Features of SOLITRACE
	Carbon Farming	Meeting to explore collaboration on Carbon Farming held on 1st December 2022	To assist the tea farmer to also be a carbon farmer to generate additional income.
ITA- Global Alliance (GAIN) partnership			The project emphasizes on Improved nutrition for workers with a special focus on women through cooking demonstrations, skit plays and awareness programmes in tea estates
ITA- UNICEF partnership	Webinar on Child Rights Week	- a webinar was organized on 21st November 2022 with all stakeholders associated with prevention of trafficking - Beneficiaries - adolescent boys and girls	West Bengal and strengthening community based child protection mechanism in 30 tea estates in North Bengal Assam - the programme in Assam covers 205 estates in Brahmaputra Valley and Barrack Valley.

ITA SOCIAL MEDIA MILESTONES

