

# Chaa Sambah

the voice of small tea growers

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## Small Tea Growers Meet Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce



On receiving a memorandum from a delegation of small tea growers (STG) on behalf of the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA), Mr. Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce and Industry, assured the delegation that the Government would consider their needs favourably at the earliest. Minister met the delegation on April 27, 2011 at his office.

The delegation underlined the fact that STGs, non-existent when the Tea Board was set up, now produce a massive 30 per cent of Indian tea. It therefore sought Tea Board membership for CISTA.

“Creation of a separate directorate under the Tea Board of India will help initiate pilot programmes on alternative market development for STGs, provide systematic training and extension services and aid the execution and monitoring of schemes,” said Bijoy Gopal Chakravarty, President, CISTA. “The cost of setting up of the directorate and its subsequent operation can be met by a proportionate share of the total cess paid by the tea industry. An amount earmarked should be used for tasks such as programme implementation, training, research, monitoring and

publications for the STG sector,” he added.

CISTA formed in 2007, represents small tea growers' associations from Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

CISTA representatives also sought support from the government for processing factories owned and managed by primary producer societies of small tea growers; credit facilities and financial support from commercial banks; consultation with CISTA in the preparation of the 12th Plan on issues pertaining to small tea growers and the involvement of CISTA in the implementation of price sharing between them and bought leaf factories.

The delegation included Mr. Bijoy Gopal Chakravarty, President; D K Dinesh Sarmah, (All Assam Small Tea Growers Association); Pronoy Basumatari, (All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association); Tadak Gap (Arunachal Pradesh Small Tea Growers Association); Pabitra Kar (All Tripura Small Tea Growers Association) and J John (Centre for Education and Communication, New Delhi).

## *Directorate for Small Tea Growers*

Considering the fact that there is enormous increase in the number of Small Tea Growers (STGs), the central government has decided to set up a separate directorate for the small tea growers under the Tea Board of India. Vijaya Laxmi Joshi, the Additional Secretary (Plantations) of the Ministry of Commerce made this public at a consultative meeting held for preparing the approach paper for the Twelfth Five Year Plan in Guwahati on June 03, 2011.

“It is as a vindication of the stand taken by the Confederation of Small Tea Growers' Associations (CISTA)”, claimed Bijoy Gopal Chakravarty, the President of the association. He said that CISTA has been consistently demanding more space for small tea growers in the Tea Board. Dinesh Sarmah, Senior Vice-President, CISTA added, “CISTA should have representation in the STG Directorate”.

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## Small Tea Growers are Important to Industry: BLF

Purushottam Bakshi Gupta, Director of the Tea Division of Hindustan Fruit Processing Pvt. Ltd, Assamore, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal in conversation with Kaustav Roy expresses his view of STGs. Hindustan Fruit produces green tea as well as CTC tea and market them as 'Bikram Tea'.

KR: What is your opinion of Small Tea Growers (STGs)?

PB: Small growers have gained a great importance in the industry. By no means can we disregard their importance. They contribute a large proportion of total production. However, growers in Uttardinajpur district and some growers in Chaulhati in Jalpaiguri district are not following a proper cultivation culture. However, they cannot be blamed for this despite the fact that the Tea Board of India and the Tea Research Association have conducted several helpful workshops.

KR: What is your opinion about primary societies of growers?

PB: There are so many benefits. This approach will help the growers get organised and more people will be able to participate in the process. Second, it will help growers take advantage of government facilities and schemes. It will help the entire industry become organised.

KR: What is your take on the 60:40 price sharing formula?

PB: It's a paradox because while in theory this formula is wonderful, it is difficult to implement since growers are yet to get organised. While societies are in operation, growers have their own mental constraints. They seek better prices alone and give scant regard to contracts. However, we cannot blame them for this as they are poor people with little financial clout. They will tend to look for immediate financial benefits. This formula remains difficult to implement.

KR: What are responsibilities of BLFs?

PB: Maintaining transparent business policy. All entities have to work collectively for stabilise

## Mizo Tea

Lal Hriatpuii

Land for cultivating tea, in Mizoram, has been provided by the village council court, the lowest local government body. The STGs of five villages - Baktawng, Khawzawl, Bungthum, Saipum and Saiphai - were allotted land. Each piece of land allotted to an STG has also been issued a land list certificate by the Deputy Commissioner of the district.

During 2009-10, the Government of Mizoram, through its Industries Department—the nodal agency for tea development—provided seeds and seedlings to STGs.

In 2011, the Horticulture Department was named as the nodal agency. The agency is expected to provide technical support to the STGs but due to a lack of funds, it is unable to do so.

In Mizoram, the Tea Board scheme for tea development has been included in the New Land Use Policy (NLUP), the flagship programme of the state

and consolidate the industry's position.

KR: Do you think established gardens can also participate in the chain of BLFs & STGs?

PB: Because of their financial strength, established gardens can pay better prices and they do use this strength to bolster their production. However, BLFs do not have such financial backing and as a result, this kind of intervention has the ability to create imbalances in the market price.

KR: Do you have any contract with STGs?

PB: No. They mostly deal with us individually or through brokers. We pay individuals on the spot. We are not aware what arrangements exist between brokers and growers.

KR: Lastly, what is your take on the industry as a whole?

PB: The market is open and will find its own way. However, the Indian tea industry has immense potential if we strengthen our marketing procedure. Packaged tea will play a big role because people have become very brand cautious.

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government. Under this new scheme the government will provide seeds, seedlings and financial support to selected STGs.

Further, a representative from an STG, the All Mizoram Small Tea Growers Association (AMSTA) will be included in the Tea Development Scheme. This scheme, if carried out as per NLUP guidelines, will benefit STGs in Mizoram.

With the support of the Tea Board, each STG Society sends three representatives to Tea Research Association, Tocklai Jorhat for five months' training. Subsequently, each trainee is expected to guide and help STG members during tea plantation and while preparing tea nurseries.

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## Potentiality of Small Tea Plantations in Assam

Sandeep Dowerah

The Indian economy is growing at a good pace; it is expected that it will overtake China in GDP growth by 2012 if this present growth rate continues. Nevertheless, while developmental statistics are rising, increasing poverty is another undeniable facet of the country's development. This is particularly evident in the North-Eastern states. This region still lags behind the rest of India. Six decades after Independence, it remains underdeveloped.

Besides national policies, if we re-examine special developmental policies created for the North Eastern States such as the Look East Policy, we will find that these too could not achieve much even two decades after their formulation. While this policy envisages trade links between North-East India and South-East Asian and South Asian countries, little attention was given towards the promotion of regional production and trade opportunities. In this connection we can cite the example of Small Tea Gardens (STGs) in Assam. STG cultivation has grown and despite the lack of any governmental support, starting from its inception in 1995, it had spread across the state of Assam by 2005.

The tea industry is still stands as the economic backbone of Assam. STGs could potentially be the pathway to the development of the region: Assam is the global

hub of tea production. Assam produces nearly 55 percent of India's total tea production. A recent survey by the state government and the Tea Board has put the number of Small Tea Growers at around 68,465 in 14 districts. Approximately 5 lakh families are involved directly or indirectly in this sector. Small growers now produce nearly 100 million kg of tea annually. Remarkably, the insurgency-affected areas of upper Assam are boosting the growth with the five upper Assam districts accounting for 94 percent of small growers among the 14 districts of the Brahmaputra valley. Youth are now taking up tea cultivation as the road to prosperity and unemployment is often alleviated by STGs in upper Assam.

But despite this potential, little heed has been given by the government towards promote this lucrative cash crop. Only 1,297 small growers are registered with Tea Board and only 1,055 small growers availed of incentives from the board.

During a field visit in Namatapung village, a remote hamlet in Tinisukia district, I spoke to a small tea grower. He revealed that poor tea growers were unable to afford the high cost of fertilisers and pesticide. He stated that he would prefer subsidised fertilisers and pesticides so as to enhance production. He has related the situation as, "Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime." He felt now the government policies are like relief work during disasters; no preparedness or capacity is built. The elderly farmer rightly pointed out the inefficiency of government policies and the inability in understanding the regional or micro-level needs of the people.



## Sustainable Livelihoods for Small Tea Growers

Tanmoy Chatterjee

Reducing poverty among Small Tea Growers (STGs) in India is the overall objective of the project 'Sustainable Livelihood for Small Tea Growers' an undertaking of the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) in partnership with Traidcraft Exchange (UK). Funded by the European Union, the project focuses on five states in India: Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.



The specific objective of the project is to enable STGs and their representative bodies to realise fairer terms of trade. The project aims to reach 50,000 STGs across India and 10,000 workers employed by STGs.

The project intends to:

1. Build a collective voice & identity for STGs

2. Build sustainable and democratic institutions of small tea growers at the local, state and national levels.
3. Undertake national and international advocacy
4. Build sustainable supply chains for STGs
5. Ensure sustainability for STGs by enhancing productivity and access to markets through policy protection, collective bargaining, access to resources and technical support.

As a first step, the project intends to conduct a baseline survey to take stock of the situation in the field. Second, farmers groups will be approached and asked to form associations, followed by imparting training and conducting exposure visits towards strengthening these groups. The aim of the capacity building exercises is to help STGs move up the ladder of the value chain. The assumption is that people's collectives might lead to product collectives and finally, to price collectives.

Traidcraft is implementing the project in Bangladesh in collaboration with Bikash, Bangladesh with a target of 1000 small tea growers and workers.

The Indian team members are:

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There are still perils on the way:

Small tea growers are still unorganised and lack representation, which is leading to exploitation by multinationals. They are facing several problems such as price realisation of green leaf, a lack of knowledge of tea cultivation, low access to credit facilities, a lack of unity, the lack of a streamlined business plan, unorganised nature and the absence of bargaining power. Moreover, they still lacked knowledge of scientific methods of tea cultivation and the use of fertilisers and pesticides. Soil conservation techniques and water management issues are also not being taken care of, impacting sustainability.

Assam Tea is losing its competitive edge in the international market due to an increase in prices and a drop in quality. A research study on STGs of Assam by Dr Yashwant Gupta of Himachal Pradesh University has very rightly recommended two measures to strengthen the sector: first, the creation of a strong forward and reverse linkages in the tea Value Chain; and second, the strengthening of networking and advocacy initiatives.

The production trend of Small Tea Growers is very healthy and there is a huge potential to revamp the state economy by using the congenial atmosphere of the state for tea cultivation. Some intervention is needed to address persisting hindrances. Some transformation in approach is also needed to decrease prices. The amalgamation of small estates and cooperative management could be introduced as a rapid initial solution.

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## Tea Processing Units for Small Tea Growers

The Tea Board of India, in its intent to promote small tea growers, has decided to help a group from West Bengal set up the country's first STG-run tea processing unit. The processing unit will be set up in Panbari village of West Bengal under the leadership of the Panbari Small Tea-Growers Society, a self-help group formed a few years ago.

The idea of setting up a processing unit was mooted by the Panbari STGs and they had initiated the process, by acquiring two hectares of land and collecting an amount of Rs 65 lakhs. The Tea Board will assist these growers and a nationalised bank has decided to provide loans.

While confirming the acceptance of the proposal, Tea Board officials emphasised the role played by the Panbari Tea Growers, without which the project would have never taken place.

# Tea Pests and Their Control

Ratul Chandra Neog

Tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is a perennial crop grown extensively in the entire North-Eastern region. Many pests find tea bushes to be a favourable breeding ground. As a result, pesticides play a major role in reducing the amount of crop lost to pests. While pest incidence and crop loss can be minimised by adopting different cultural and indigenous practices, the judicious use of pesticides deserves attention in tea pest management.

Major tea pests with site of attack and their time of occurrence			
	Pest	Site of attack	Time of occurrence
<b>A. Sucking pests</b>			
1	Helopeltis or tea mosquito bug	Young leaves bud and tender shoots	Feb- Nov
	Jassid	Young leaves and tender stems	Feb-Jul
3	Aphids	Buds, tender stems and young leaves	Jan-Apr
4	Thrips	Unopened and partly opened buds and young leaves	Jan-Jul
5	Red spider	Upper surface of the mature leaves	Mar-Apr & Sept-Oct
6	Scarlet mite	Lower surface of mature leavers and young stems	Oct-Nov
7	Pink mite	Lower surface of young leaves	Mar-Jun & Oct- Nov
8	Purple mite	Upper surface of mature leaves	Feb-Apr & Oct-Nov
<b>B. Chewing pests</b>			
1	Looper caterpillar	Young as well as mature leaves and entire foliage by older caterpillars	Mar-Oct
2	Bunch caterpillar	Lower epidermis of leaves also the whole leaf by late instar	Mar-Nov
3	Psychid caterpillar	Mature leaves and bark	May-Jun & Sept-Oct
4	Nettle grab	Lower surface of the mature leaves	Apr-Sept
5	Flush worm	Bud	An-May
6	Red slug caterpillar	Under surface of the mature leaves & bark of stem	Whole year
<b>C. Stem borer and soil bone pests</b>			
1	Red stem borer	1-2 year old stem	-
2	Cockchafer	Bark of stem just below soil surface and roots	Apr -Jun
3	Cricket	Tender stems of young seedlings	Mar-Oct
4	Termite	Stem and root	Dec-Feb, Apr-Jun & Aug-Oct

## Damage Symptoms of Major Tea Pests

1. Helopeltis or tea mosquito bug: A ring-like spot develops at the site of the puncture, turns into a translucent light brown spot which later becomes dark brown, sunken and dries up. Leaves curl up and become badly deformed.
2. Tea thrips: Initially seen as a light brownish discoloration of the tip and basal part of leaves, badly damaged leaves appear rough, deformed and curled. Shoot growth is retarded.
3. Tea jassid: The growth of the shoot is retarded. Leaves appear curved inward with recurved margins. They subsequently turn brown and dry up. The midrib and veins of leaves turn brownish.
4. Looper caterpillar: Young caterpillars make holes along the margins of leaves. Subsequently, instar caterpillars eat away entire leaves. The whole bush can be defoliated.
5. Bunch caterpillar: Caterpillars remain in a cluster during the day and become active after sunset. Young caterpillars feed on the epidermal tissues and at the margin while older caterpillars eat away entire leaves.
6. Red spider mite: Reddish spots develop on sucking sites and subsequently unite to form large brown patches.
7. Scarlet mite: Yellowing of leaves and a brownish discoloration of the midrib on the under surface is observed. The bark of the affected stems splits.
8. Pink mite: Leaves become pale dry and leader veins and margins of the under surface of the leaves show pinkish discoloration.
9. Purple mite: Leaves turn purplish bronze, dry up and fall off. Leaves appear to be dusted with white particles.

## Control Measures

### Cultural practices

#### Sucking insects (Helopeltis, thrips and jassid)

1. Prune or deep skiff those sections or areas which were heavily infested

last year by helopeltis; 2. Remove weeds and other alternate hosts; 3. Follow black plucking in badly infested areas and spray against helopeltis 2/3 days after plucking; 4. Stir the soil in December to March to destroy the pupae of thrips; 5. Spray the bush frame with 6 kg washing soda and 2-3 kg quick lime mixed in 100 litre of water using a hand or foot sprayer with a broad cone nozzle.

#### Mites

1. Plant shade if it is lacking; 2. Maintain weed free ground; 3. Protect the foliage on road side sections from dust by growing hedges; 4. Grow titaphool (*Phlogacanthus thrysiflorus*) as hedge; 5. Don't allow pluckers to enter uninfested areas from infested areas; 6. Check cattle trespass in the garden

#### Leaf defoliators (Looper, Red slug and bunch caterpillar)

1. Mark out infested sections and areas; 2. Collect and destroy chrysalids; 3. Hand collect and destroy loopers from December to February by stirring the soil; 4. During November to February, red slugs should be collected and destroyed from forks of bush, leaf folds, dry fallen leaves and pruning litters; 5. Collect and destroy bunch caterpillars from dried leaves on the ground from November to January

#### Termites

1. Clean bushes properly by removing snags and dead or diseased branches when pruning; 2. Paint the pruning cuts with Indopaste; 3. Improve drainage conditions; 4. Improve shade status; 5. Destroy termite mounds and the queen.

## Chemical Control

### Sucking insects (Helopeltis, thrips and jassid)

1. In unpruned or skiffed tea, spray Phosalone / Chlorpyrifos / Quinalphos at 1: 400 ratio using high volume (H.V.) or at 1: 200 ratio using low volume (L.V.) sprayer or Thiomathoxam @ 40gm per 200 litre of water against helopeltis during early July. Spray the second round after 2-3 weeks with Phosalone/ Profenofos; 2. Spray monthly one round of any neem formulation followed by Phosalone at 1: 400 (H.V.) if necessary during March to June; 3. Spray one round, if necessary, of Phosalone at 1: 400 (H.V.) from July to November.

#### Mites

##### Red spider and scarlet mite

1. In unpruned and skiffed tea, spray sulphur formulation 1:100(L.V.) or 1: 200 (H.V.) followed by Dicofof 1:400 (H.V.) or 1:2 00 (L.V.) after 2-3 weeks during mid January –mid February; 2. Spray one round per month any neem formulations or sulphur formulations during March to June; 3. Conduct spot application of any neem formulation or Dicofof during July to November.

##### Pink mite

1. Spray any sulphur formulation 1:100 (L.V.) or 1:200 (L.V.) during February; 2. Spray one round monthly, if necessary, any neem formulation during April to May; 3. Go for spot application of any neem product during July to November.

##### Purple mite

1. Spray Dicofof 1:400(H.V.) or 1:200 (L.V.) during mid to end January; 2. Spray any sulphur formulation during January; 3. Go for spot application of any neem formulation with Dicofof (1:600 in H.V.) during July to November.

##### Looper and Red slug caterpillar

1. Spray Phosalone 1:400 (H.V.) or 1:200 (L.V.) during February to April; 2. Spray neem formulation or Quinalphos/ Phosalone 1: 400 (H.V.) during May to July; 3. Repeat the spray during August to January.

##### Bunch caterpillar

1. Spray Quinalphos/ Phosalone 1:400 (H.V.) or 1: 200(L.V.) during March – April; 2. Go for spot application of Quinalphos/ Phosalone during May to August and also during October to December.

#### Termites

- Apply Chlorpyrifos 1: 300 during September- October.

## Target of Spraying

For effective control, following target of spraying for the pests should be followed.

1. For red spider and purple mite, both surface of the leaves of the whole canopy; 2. For pink mite, both surface of leaves of top and middle hamper; 3. For scarlet mites, lower surface of leaves and stems, spray from older leaves to lower leaves; 4. For thrips, tender shoots, cracks and crevices of the frame and soil surface thoroughly; 5. For jassids, lower surface of leaves of whole canopy thoroughly; 6. For tea mosquito bugs, the whole canopy, weeds and soil surface; 7. For looper, the whole canopy and whole tree trunks thoroughly; 8. For bunch caterpillars, the mid and bottom hamper of the bushes; 9. For termites, the whole frame, including collar. Remove wounds before spraying.

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