



Planters Welfare Association

(AN ASSOCIATION OF MUTUAL BENEFITS)

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EC at AGM

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: A. Batra

Vice - President: Capt V.K.Mehra

Ex- Officio: V.Lall

Secretary : R.K.Patney

Treasurer: B.Chhabra

Members : A.K. Saxena / R.Wazirchand / A Ganguly / S. Chaudhary

Members Meeting (Socials): Mrs. Nirmla Lall, Mrs. Rani Patney, Mrs. Sunanda Chhabra, Mr. Rajiv Wazirchand

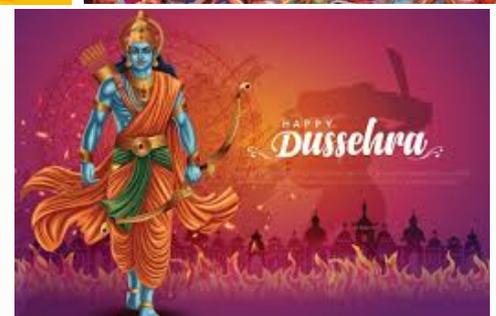
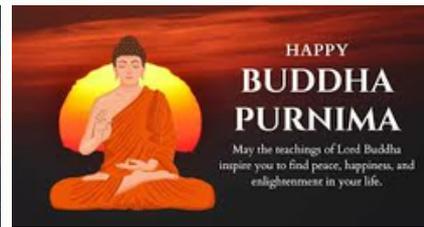
Member Mailing: Mrs. Rani Patney

Editor: Ashok Batra

Period 2 - October 2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I had the honour of addressing our members last November for the first time, and was awaiting some positive inputs and concrete suggestions, to add more value to our Events and other aspects, including communications, website to name a few.

Events continue to be well attended , with locations and lunches well appreciated. The November event has perforce been changed from the Air Force Poolside to the Delhi Gymkhana Club- Jamun Tree, which has already been advised to you in Roopy's email/message.

We still need inputs on Births, Weddings, Achievements, Anecdotes etc and would be only too pleased for any advice, suggestions to improve the Newsletter, to make it more interesting. Thank you to those that have sent their appreciation to the earlier ones.

With the huge impacts all over the World with Climate Change, I honestly feel, that we, who have been with Nature and realise the value we continue to lose, need to lead the way, by showing the younger generation, our families and friends, that we as individuals, can and will, bring about the direction to the desired change just by following the 4 R's in our personal lives – Recycle, Reuse, Reduce and Recover.

And lastly, my personal requests to us all, please visit our website (pwa.in) much more and regularly, for important updates, and much more, to make it a worthwhile addition.

Warm wishes to you and the family for a joyous, healthy and happy Festive season, with an even brighter expectation for a Super 2025



Ashok Batra



**Pour Decisions
are
Made with Tea**

MEMBERS MEETING (SOCIAL) FOR THE YEAR 2024 – 2025

The Events held and the up – coming Activities for the year 2024 – 2025, are as under -

S. No.	Date	Venue	Venue booked by
1.	Sun 11th August, 2024	DSOI, Dhaula kuan, New Delhi (Lunch)	Capt. V K Mehra
2.	Sun 22th Sept 2024	DSOI , Palam Vihar , Gurgaon (Lunch)	Mr. A.K.Saxena
3.	Sun 17th November, 2024	Delhi Gymkana Club , New - Delhi (JAMUN TREE) (Lunch)	Mr B.Chhabra
4.	Sun 15th December, 2024	Annual General Meeting - 2024 at Delhi Gymkhana Club ,New Delhi Party Cottage - 1 (Lunch) (SPONSORED EVENT)	Mr. A.Batra
5.	Sunday, 19th January, 2025	Hosted at their Farm House by Mr. & Mrs Narotam Sayal (SPONSORED By Mr. & Mrs N. Sayal)	
6.	Sunday, 23rd February, 2025	Residence of Mr. P.S Tibb , Gurgaon (Lunch)	Mr.& Mrs P.S Tibb
7.	April , 2025	Delhi Gymkhana Club , New - Delhi (Jamun Tree) Lunch)	Mr. B .Chhabra

The two Social Events held till date this Financial year, (as mentioned above) in August and September 2024 were once again a huge success, and thoroughly enjoyed by us all. An average of 60 + members and their spouses attended; with great comradery, as well as super and delicious lunch menu's by the EC Ladies.

This is to bring to your notice, that for the event held at DSOI , New – Delhi during the month of August 2024, Eleven attendees members could not reach the venue due to the inclement weather conditions and flooding of localities and main road. You would recall that earlier the EC had decided that those who confirm and do not attend would still need to pay their share. However, the Executive Committee took a holistic view of this situation, and as such, this was not imposed for these members.

Members are reminded that all those who confirm and do not attend the event, shall be billed ,and the amount realised. The Association is in no position to bear such unwarranted losses.



I LIKE YOU
BUT I'M A LITTLE
CHAI



MOVE
OO LONG



NOTHING
TO TEA HERE

CHAMPAGNE & ROSES

BIRTHS: Nothing to report

WEDDINGS: Harkirat ,S/o Mr. T.P.S.Josen, got married to Sonam in Charlotte on 3RD August 2024

Note: Members are once again requested to inform us by email or by post regarding Births, & Marriages. This helps us to include the announcements in the Newsletter.

NEW MEMBERS

1. **Mr Abid Rahman** - 4350 B – SR -6 , Vasant Kunj, New – Delhi 10070 , Mobile: 9733251665 , e mail : aresquire@gmail.com
2. **Dr. Vivek Barua Kaushik** – Fresco Apartments, Flat 602, Tower 16, Nirwana Country , Gurgaon, Mobile: 9871738547 , e mail: drvikram.uro@gmail.com
3. **Mr Vijay Kumar Tyagi** – Village – Rajpura , Atrara Near Hapur , Hapur Kithor Road – 245206, Kharkhoda , Distt. Meerut , Mobile : 9101269256 , e mail : vktyagi123@gmail.com

We are happy to report that on date , we have 259 members which includes Patrons/ NCR / Out Station / Hony. Members.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS / E MAIL/ MOBILE NO

All changes , if any , have been made in the Members directory , which is circulated to all members at regular intervals . The same is available for viewing at our website www.pwa.in

OBITUARY

With great sorrow we inform our members of the sad demise of the following since our last Newsletter:

Our Member -

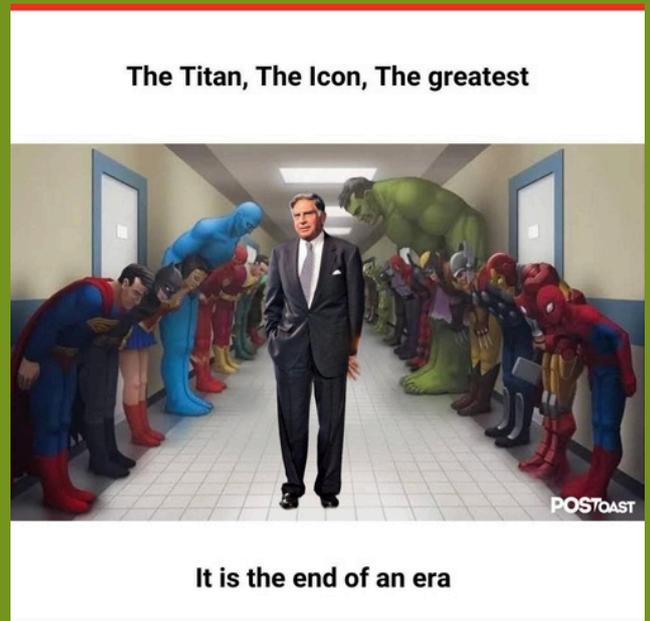
- Mr. Chhattar Singh Karan
- Mr. Saran Singh
- Mr. Sanjeet (Sam) Singh Chadha

Near & Dear ones – Mother of Mr. Rajiv Hora

Friends -

- Mr. R.C Suri (Ex Jokai)
- Mr. Romesh Mahajan (Ex Assam Oil)
- Mr. Jani Chacko Uthup (Ex J.Thomas)
- Mr Sonam Gyalsten (Ex WMs)
- Mr. Duncan Allan (Ex Duncan)
- Mr. M.H.Chinoy (Ex Duncan's, Kolkata)

Letters expressing our condolences were sent to the bereaved.



COMMUNICATION

E-mail - As advised earlier, all our communications are forwarded by e mails .

We earnestly request those members who have not yet forwarded their e – mail ID , to kindly forward the same, to the Secretary at rkpatney@gmail.com to enable us to update our records and forward all documents by e – mail, which save us time and cost.

WhatsApp Messages - As conveyed earlier, WhatsApp group (PWA – NCR) has been introduced since the Bulk SMS facility has been withdrawn . Many members who do not have WhatsApp features , are requested to install the same so that they could be added to this group. The information may be forwarded to the Hony. Secretary at mobile no 9810020533. It will be prudent to mention that few members have exited the group , and they are requested to join the group to avail this facility. It may be noted, that only the Hony. Secretary has the ability to send relevant messages, while all others cannot place other messages or forwards on this Group- so no junk will be sent.

Website - Has been updated regularly. It is disheartening to see an extremely low number of viewers and hits on this site, despite the effort, work, time and expenses put in ,to keep it updated for you. Our humble request to view and give your comments to enable us to improve further.

SUBSCRIPTION:

1 - Annual Subscription for NCR members is Rs 500/- per annum and Rs 200/- for out station members. We are glad to report that we have received admirable support from our members, both NCR / Out station.

The Executive Committee wishes to convey our thanks to Mr. Rajiv Wazirchand , our E.C Member, who took the onus of following up with members whose subscriptions were due . The Subscriptions are virtually up to date. We are indebted to our members who have cooperated to enable us to get such results.

Kindly note that the Annual subscription is payable by all members irrespective of their Age.

This is as per the resolution passed at the AGM in the year 2018. The rules under Societies Act are very stringent . As per the rules of the Association for delayed payments are as under –

- 1 – One year default - Member will not be able to vote at the AGM
- 2 - Two year default -Member will not be allowed to attend the AGM.
- 3 – Three year default Membership will be terminated.

Mode of Payment of Subscription –

a)**Cheque** -Cheque favouring **PLANTERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION**, may please be forwarded by Courier/ Speed Post to our Registered Office (Residence Of Mr. B.Chhabra) Addressed to Mr. B.Chhabra , D- 247 (GF) , Defence Colony , New – Delhi 110024
Mobile no – 9818025579.

b) **Bank Transfer** – The required details are as **under** –

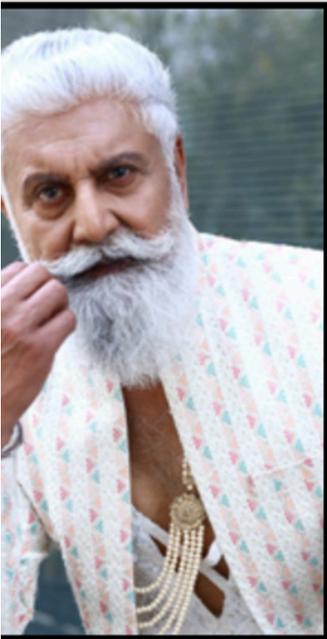
- 1 – Name of Beneficiary – Planters Welfare Association
- 2 – Saving bank account - A/C no 004601050068
- 3 – IFSC Code - ICIC0000046
- 4 – Bank & Branch- ICICI Bank, New Friends Colony , New – Delhi – 110025

ACHIEVEMENTS

A New Beginning :

Mr. Ravinder Singh Manhas, after his successful tenure in the Tea World, pursued modelling, along with his wife, Raman, beside their work in the educational field. The modelling career has taken them to a new height and they are projected on various Social media . He has been a " SHOW STOPPER", which in the Fashion World is the ultimate. Our respect and congratulations to both.

From Retirement to Reinvention **A New Beginning**



ABOUT US

From having lived a king sized life in the idyllic greens of Tea Plantations in Assam to ramp walks now, and embracing a totally diverse innings post retirement from Tea to fashion campaigns, seems incredible for both of us.

My hats off to the fashion industry where, at one time, models were considered lucky enough, if they continued to work beyond a certain age, not anymore! I am surely grateful as I was truly surprised when post Covid era, people started appreciating my look, as I had embraced greys and growing beard probably added to my charm. Slowly and gradually, besides getting compliments, I saw myself on the ramp! Many brands are actually recognising the importance of inclusivity and diversity and my full-fledged appreciation for this. No more one has to conform to the 'classic' good looks; one must have uniqueness in their personality and appearance.

Well, my Greys and long beard became my unique selling point! Initially, facing cameras and lights were a little challenging, but now have become part and parcel of our lives which had changed for the good and most importantly, we were taking life as it came! We had opened up to cheering audiences, and our social life had a new set of friends. Networking had expanded in the new arena. Social media, to which we were alien earlier, we now have a strong foot hold. The whole thought process had changed.

My important venture was as a **show stopper with Delhi Times Fashion Week** (of Times of India group). Very recent on the block was being a **show stopper with Dreamz Production House & Dubai Beauty School** with Neha Dhupia, former Miss India as the chief guest & many other celebrities.

Shall keep it rolling as long as we can. Today, reflecting back, I think that in the journey of life, each phase brings its own unique set of opportunities that are equally enriching, and we must encash and tap our hidden potentials. I had never envisioned such a vibrant future. After all, life is a journey, and AGE is not a number but a three lettered word, navigate the journey with grace and gratitude.

And the Journey Countinues.....



Ravinder Singh Manhas - ex
Williamson Magor / Mcleod Russel



Raman Singh Manhas - ex
Assam Valley School



Our member, Mrs. Sudarshan Madhok, was facilitated by FabIndia on her completion of 50 years with them. Our heartiest congratulations to Mrs. Madhok on this grand innings



DONATIONS

Donation of Rs 50000/- - was received from Brig M.J.S.Bains His generous contribution is greatly appreciated. The amount will be utilised for A.G.M – 2024 and Brig. Bains will be one of the Sponsors.

At the DSOI Lunch gathering held on Sunday 22nd September, the Grandson of Late Mr. Saran Singh, presented his Grandfather's book – "Old Age- Matured Life ,"as well as a donation of Rs. 5000/-, for which our grateful thanks and appreciation.



*It's always
tea time*

CHAI BINA
CHAIN KAHAAN
REEE.....



The Charles Schulz Philosophy



The following is the philosophy of Charles Schulz, The creator of the 'Peanuts' comic strip. You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just ponder on them. Just read the e-mail straight through, and you'll get the point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America pageant.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday.

These are no second-rate achievers.

They are the best in their fields.

But the applause dies.

Awards tarnish ...

Achievements are forgotten.

Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.



Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.





Easier?

The lesson:

The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money ... or the most awards. They simply are the ones who care the most.

Pass this on to those people whom you keep close in your heart.

"Don't worry about the world coming to an end today.

It's already tomorrow in Australia!"



"Be Yourself.

Tea & Freedom Struggle - Reju George

Sharing an interesting article , read on ...

Makaibari tea garden offers swadeshi sip for Independence Day

The collector's item has been christened Verleni 1947

Makaibari tea garden, the only tea garden in Darjeeling district that claims to have never been owned "by the components of the Raj" will unfurl a limited edition "swadeshi tea" made from tea bushes that were planted in 1947, on Independence Day.

The collector's item has been christened Verleni 1947.

Rudra Chatterjee, MD, Luxmi Tea, said: "Makaibari was always a swadeshi tea, a Darjeeling estate that was never under British ownership and now owned by Luxmi Tea, a company started as a tool for Satyagraha whose founders were members of the Anushilan Party."

Makaibari Tea Estates in Kurseong was set up by Girish Chandra Banerjee in 1859. He belonged to a zamindar family from Borai, about 100km from Calcutta.

The tea estate is now under Luxmi Tea and the group, too, has a “swadeshi” link.

P.C. Chatterjee, the present MD’s grandfather, began to cultivate tea independently in the colonial era, without management agencies or advisers from London. Assamese and Bengali freedom fighters and students who also rebelled against the British rule joined Luxmi which was then referred to as Indian Tea and Provisions. This cultivation was started in Tripura in 1912.

“My grandfather was a freedom fighter. He founded this company as a tool for Satyagraha,” said Chatterjee.

The Verleni 1947 tea, which will be available from midnight of August 14, is harvested from Chinese tea bushes.

“Only 1,000 packs of the limited edition Verleni 1947 will be available from August 15,” said Atul Rastogi, CEO, Luxmi Tea.

Makaibari produces around 1 lakh kilograms of tea annually and is spread across 1,400 acres of plantation, half of which is a verdant rainforest.

Makaibari has made waves globally.

In 2014, Makaibari’s Silver Tips Imperial was sold at Rs 1.17 lakh per kg. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace in 2016, he gifted her a packet of Makaibari tea. The brew from Makaibari was also served to participants and staff of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

[#rejugeorge](#) [#tea](#) [#darjeeling](#) [#happyindependenceday2024](#)

Credit courtesy : The article by Vivek Chhetri is shared from The Telegraph dated 15 Aug 2023



The Story Behind Hookhmol Tea, Which Broke Records at Auction in Ind



Hookhmol tea being displayed at the Guwahati tea auction centre tea lounge.

The story behind the failure of the first semiconductor chip making company in the world in its digital camera venture in the United States has scripted the success story of a tea grower in India. Such has been the impact of this failure story of the CMOS sensor division of Micron Technology that it inspired

Hookhmol tea in India's tea-rich Assam to set a new world record for prices of black tea, for which Assam is famous for.

Hookhmol CTC tea not only set this new record of Rs 1506 per kg at the Kolkata tea auction centre about a fortnight back, but also improved this record the following week at the same auction centre to Rs1552 per kg. Hookhmol tea also sold at Rs 723 per kg and Rs 751 per kg in the subsequent week at the Guwahati tea auction centre (GTA), which was the highest prices ever at GTAC.

The driving force behind Hookhmol tea, Bhaskar Hazarika, used to work as a product engineer for the CMOS sensor division of Micron Technology in Boise, Idaho about two decades back.

The company used to produce and supply CMOS image sensors (digital cameras) for all the mobile phone manufacturers in the world – be it to the high-end Apple or any other mobile company. Micron was the pioneer of CMOS image sensor technology and had the highest market share in the world.

However, its competitor Sony focused totally on producing low-volume, high-quality expensive cameras, while Samsung focused on producing only low-quality, high-volume cheap cameras.

The driving force behind Hookhmol tea, Bhaskar Hazarika.

Initially, these competitors were far behind in technology and could not compete with Micron, but within a few years, they caught

up. Samsung could supply the cheapest cameras, so they stole the low end market while Sony could supply the highest quality phones and snatched away the high-end market.

This resulted in customers asking for Sony quality at Samsung price from Micron Technology, which was impossible. Micron started losing money, and the management decided to spin off the CMOS image sensor division.



Though Bhaskar, alumni of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, left Micron to join Eastman Kodak in Sunnyvale, California and worked there for a few more years, the lesson he learned at Micron – quality and quantity doesn't go together – remained with him.

Bhaskar returned to Assam in 2009 at his father's request to concentrate on his family's tea business. Hookmol hitherto was just a small tea garden producing about 12 lakh kgs of tea leaves. The tea estate had not even installed its own factory.

"I was at sea; I saw no business with just 12 lakh kgs of green leaves," said Bhaskar. Since there was no other option left for him but to concentrate on the tea business, Bhaskar installed a tea factory and concentrated on producing tea on his own instead of selling green leaves to nearby tea gardens with factories.

With 12 lakh kgs of green leaves not enough to feed his factory, Bhaskar still had to depend on small tea growers in the area for green tea leaves. But he realized that it was impossible to find "two leaves and a bud," the basic requirement to make quality tea when depending on small tea growers.

With quality as the philosophy and with the aim to produce only high-end tea, Bhaskar purchased a sick, loss-making tea garden at Jorhat, about 100 km away from his factory. Soon after, he purchased another garden in the nearby area to feed his factory. "With my experience at Micron, I decided to go for making high-end tea," Bhaskar said.

For the next ten years, Bhaskar concentrated on just two things: Reviving those sick gardens by planting more than 4 lakh new tea plants every year, and developing the culture of plucking the finest quality green leaf possible.

"It was not easy to motivate the workers to go for high plucking rounds. We pluck the same tea bush within six or seven days despite rain, wind, sun, heat, or mud throughout the year," he said. Hookmol today makes about 470,000 kgs of CTC tea and holds the number one slot at Kolkata and Guwahati tea auction centers, both among the busiest tea trading centers in the world.

Genesis of Hookmol

Bhaskar's father was the first person in Assam to start a tea nursery business. Until then, tea gardens had their own nurseries. Soon after, he started a tea plantation as a small tea grower, which Bhaskar developed after returning from the U.S.

Bhaskar said that his great-grandfather, Hookmol Bokolial, a very hardworking, self-made man, was an inspiration for his father. "So we named our tea Hookmol tea," he explained.

Hookmol today is a combination of three plantations: New Kailashpur Tea Estate at Tengakhat, Dibrugarh and Nagajanka Tea Estate at Mariani, and Jorhat and plantations done by Bhaskar's father in and around the Rajgarh area of the Dibrugarh district.

Although Bhaskar's father laid the foundation for Hookmol tea, Bhaskar had his own bit of struggle in reaching the present position.

"It took me several years of struggle to procure the license for my factory. I almost gave up when I finally got it in 2013," he said.

The Road Ahead

A packet of Hookhmol tea.

Bhaskar said that for fourteen years, Hookhmol tea has concentrated on developing skills to produce the finest tea. "We never tried to scale up, but now we will scale up a little bit, but still our focus will be on quality," he said.

Hookhmol tea is planning to install another factory at Nagajanka tea estate within two years because it is getting very expensive to carry green leaf for four hours every day with the increasing cost of fuel and rising temperatures due to climate change. "But to feed the present factory we are looking forward to acquiring a tea garden nearby soon," he said.

According to Bhaskar, producing quality tea is the only survival mantra for the Indian tea industry as a whole, and Assam tea in particular. He said that more than 60 percent of the cost of production was labor cost. There was not much scope left to check the cost of production without compromising quality, and Assam tea had no option but to raise quality and get out of the commodity tag.



Pesticide residues: A serious concern for Tea Industry

Uddhab Chandra Sarmah

(ucsarmah@gmail.com)

Before delving into the main issues arising out of the residual limits of chemical pesticides being used by the small tea growers of Assam on tea bushes for control and killing of pests to harvest the available crop which brings revenue earnings by selling to nearby bought leaf factories, let us understand why the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) of chemical pesticides is becoming increasingly important for small tea growers in Assam. The reasons are mainly as follows:

1. **Regulatory Compliance:** National and international markets have strict regulations regarding pesticide residues in tea. Meeting these MRL standards is essential for accessing and maintaining these markets.

2. **Consumer Safety and Health:** There is growing consumer awareness and concern about the safety of food products. Ensuring that pesticide residues are within acceptable limits helps in maintaining consumer trust and protecting public health.

3. **Market Access and Export Potential:** Compliance with MRL standards is critical for export markets, especially in regions like the European Union, the United States, and Japan, where regulations are stringent. Non-compliance can lead to rejection of consignments and loss of market access.

4. **Environmental Impact:** Excessive use of pesticides can harm the environment, affecting soil health, water quality, and biodiversity. Adhering to MRL guidelines promotes sustainable agricultural practices and helps in the long-term health of the tea-growing ecosystem.

5. **Economic Viability:** Non-compliance with MRL standards can lead to financial losses due to the rejection of tea consignments, fines, and loss of reputation. Ensuring MRL compliance helps small tea growers maintain economic stability

and profitability.

6. **Brand Reputation:** Compliance with MRL standards helps in building a positive brand image. Small tea growers can market their tea as safe and environmentally friendly, attracting more health-conscious consumers and premium pricing.

7. **Government and Industry Support:** There is increasing support from government bodies and industry organizations to help small tea growers meet MRL standards through training, resources, and certification programs. This support is crucial for the sustainability of small tea growers.

Therefore, by focusing on MRL compliance, small tea growers in Assam can ensure the safety and quality of their tea, meet regulatory requirements, protect the environment, and secure better market opportunities.

A very tense situation had lately arisen concerning small tea growers (STGs) of mainly Upper Assam after the notice and declaration of closing down all bought leaf factories (BLFs) by Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association (ABLTMA) from June 5th this year, till such time the STGs supplying the green leaves produce test certificates that their green leaves are free from any banned chemicals and are also within the limits of the approved chemicals under Plant Protection Codes (PPC).

However, due to the government's intervention, the ABLTMA has withdrawn the warning of closure of BLFs. Normal functioning of all BLFs taking green leaves from STGs have been resumed.

Over the last 3-4 decades, both the Estate factories and the Bought leaf factories have produced teas by way of establishing a system of collecting green leaves from nearby or distant small tea growers with the help of some Agents in signed agreements for the entire season, and this

system has been in vogue everywhere right from the beginning of the season. There must have been hundreds of cases of MRL issues during this period. But it is after the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Tea Board took proactive stands recently on MRL exceeding approved limits and traces of residual toxicity of banned pesticides for tea plantations, thereby causing the closure of a few BLFs and Estate factories from producing teas, that these issues have come into focus of all tea consumers.

Because of stern action with issue of warning to all BLFs and Estate factories by the Tea Board to check samples of teas in NABL certified factories before dispatch —by ensuring that teas produced by each factory are free from toxins and are consumable as regular drinks —that the ABLTMA decided not to accept any consignment of green leaf without certificate of testing MRL.

The earlier decision taken by the Bought Leaf factories not to accept green leaves without certificate of MRL clearance had created a desperate situation for small tea growers in maintaining their livelihoods. The Estate factories will not suffer since they can take all effective measures as necessary.

Although the situation between the STGs and the ABLTMA is looming large to create pressure upon the Central and State Ministries of Industry and Commerce and the Tea Board, the ground realities of the problem have neither been understood, nor is there any plan as to how these challenges can be resolved perpetually along with creating a roadmap for future sustainability.

It is to be noted that all BLFs are built for manufacturing tea from green leaves collected from STGs only, and to sell the final tea products to consumers either through auction or privately. Since the time the BLFs have come into operation, there has been a sharp growth of STGs over the last 3-4 decades. All BLF owners also have become financially sound with the business of selling tea. Therefore, both the par-

ties need each other to run the business comfortably and amicably like a big family.

Some of the most important areas which can be mentioned here are:

1. Owners of all BLFs are mostly dependent on their Agents, who collect and supply as per their assigned quantities of green leaves for the year.

2. The BLF owners are not usually found to be connected to each and every tea grower who happen to be sources. This system hampers the traceability operations which could have helped in finding out the root causes of MRL issues.

3. There is hardly any system of keeping collected green leaves separately from each Agent to govern quality and check tea samples for chemical residues.

4. The warning issued by the BLFs about checking MRL at green leaf stage was not properly thought through, because it's not like checking human blood samples for blood sugar with glucometer. Hundreds of laboratories will be required to check NABL certified MRL of tea shoots, which is presently impossible.

5. Similarly, all small tea growers must be aware of the side-effects of each and every chemical, not only for the health of consumers but also for the health of their tea bushes which get affected over the years.

6. **AWARENESS** has to be developed to know each and every chemical used for pest control and diseases affecting tea, its doses, spraying techniques, and most importantly the interval time between the last plucking and the day of spraying. It must not be less than 7 days to take care of residues limits.

7. There must be a system of record keeping of dates and times for all chemicals used after plucking.

8. The owners of all BLFs must need to appoint experienced field persons or Agriculture graduates to supervise STGs by organizing good agricultural practices, book-keeping and other compliances as required for the desired raw materials, so as to produce the kind of quality teas required for both domestic and international markets.

Tea industry in Assam, West Bengal facing a critical situation due to adverse weather conditions

By [The Meghalayan Express](#)

September 16, 2024

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: Assam and West Bengal, central to the North Indian tea industry, are facing a critical situation due to adverse weather conditions. The region has been hit by excessive heat, a rain deficit in May, followed by an imbalance of excessive rainfall and insufficient sunshine. These conditions have severely affected tea production.

In a statement on Monday, Sandeep Singhania, president of the Tea Association of India (TAI), estimated that the combined crop loss for the two states could reach 60 million kilograms by June, compared to the previous year's output.

"The North Indian tea industry is grappling with a significant production shortfall of 60 million kilograms by June of the current crop year compared to the same period last year, according to estimates from a tea body. Adverse weather conditions have heavily affected the tea harvest," Singhania said.

Singhania said the loss of the first and second flush crops, which are known for producing the highest quality teas, is expected to have a considerable impact on producers' revenue. This shortfall may also lead to an increase in tea prices, as the reduced supply could drive up costs for consumers.

Singhania said that tea estates in Assam and West Bengal are facing substantial production deficits. In May 2024, Assam's tea estates are estimated to be about 20% behind compared to the same period last year, while West Bengal's estates are lagging by approximately 40%.

"The data from the Tea Board of India shows a notable drop in production up to April 2024, with Assam experiencing an 8% decrease and West Bengal seeing a 13% reduction compared to the previous year. These figures reflect the severe impact of adverse weather conditions on tea production in these key regions," he said.



The TAI also reported that data from the IMD revealed a significant rainfall deficit in major tea-growing districts. In West Bengal, rainfall was 50 to 80% below normal levels, while in Assam, the deficit ranged from 10 to 30% compared to the expected amounts for the period.

The TAI further explained that the southwest monsoon arrived a week earlier than usual in the tea-growing regions of Assam and West Bengal. During the first half of June, these areas experienced significantly higher than normal rainfall.

“The unprecedented weather conditions have had a severe impact on tea bushes, leading to considerable disruptions in the cropping pattern and resulting in lower production during the affected months. The adverse weather has compromised the health of the tea bushes, making them more vulnerable to pests and diseases,” Singhanian said.

“Tea estates have reported significant infestations of pests such as Helopeltis, Looper Caterpillar, Green Fly, and Red Spider Mites. Additionally, diseases including Fusarium Dieback, Bacterial Blight, and Red Rust have spread widely across the gardens. These pest and disease issues have further exacerbated the challenges faced by the tea industry, contributing to the overall decline in production,” Singhanian also said.

Singhanian further reported that data from the IMD indicated an unusual increase in rainfall during the month. West Bengal received 15-66% more rain than usual, while Assam saw an increase of 3-20% compared to the average. “This excessive rainfall, combined with a lack of sunshine, has significantly hindered crop production in both states,” he said.

“The adverse weather conditions have particularly affected the first and second flush teas, which are known for their high quality and fetch the best prices each year. The lack of ideal growing conditions has therefore had a serious impact on the tea industry’s ability to produce and sell premium teas,” he added.



The Sentinel

of this land, for its people

The Invincible 'Tea mosquito bug': A curse for Tea Industry!

Uddhab Chandra Sarmah

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The experience of infestations of 'Tea mosquito bug' (*Helopeltis theivora*) in the tea industry can be considered a curse to happen almost every year for the past three decades of time, causing an unprecedented loss of the most valuable crop and directly affecting a tremendous loss of revenue earnings at the close of the season. At the same time, the quality degradation of teas largely affects the overall price scenario, also badly creating an imbalance between the cost of production and the sale price of teas, which is finally realized. On the other side, from food safety points of view, the high load of inorganic chemicals used for protection and control of the menace created by these sucking bugs means that the possibility of pesticide residues (MRL) in made teas looms large and has been proven to be a serious concern for every tea consumer.

It has been reported that the crop loss due to pest infestation in tea is estimated to be about over 145 million kg per year, and in revenue, the loss is around Rs 2,800 crore per year, which requires everyone to be aware of the seriousness of the matter.

For the past few decades, along with the other sucking pests, the infestation of tea mosquitoes has exhibited the nature of sucking tender tea shoots and secreting enzymes with toxins by way of puncturing the leaves (stomata) and tender stems of the growing tea shoots. They also paralyse the growth hormones in emerging leaves, causing a complete cessation of new leaf emergence for more than three weeks and destroying the green colouring pigments called 'chlorophyll', turning the leaf colour totally dark black without any regrowth. For the tea industry, this mosquito infestation of tea bushes severely disrupts production, the value of which is unbelievable. Failure to protect the tea bushes from this insect, especially in the most valuable second flush of each season during the months of May-July, is likely to cause a loss of 30-40% of the revenue income from the tea leaves throughout the year. Farmers are still unaware of these enzymes and toxins that completely shut down the growth of tea leaves and the death of branches.

Regret to mention here that this problem has been occurring almost every year and posing a serious setback for the tea industry not only in producing and making quality tea for both domestic and international markets but also for the most vital factors of food safety in maintaining the Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) of the pesticides used for control of sucking pests like *Helopeltis*, aphids, Jassids, and oth-



ers that have been noticed to be gaining resistance to the chemicals used for control over the years of time.

In this article, a roadmap has been prepared, highlighting some ways to mitigate the problems that adhere to the guidelines given by TRA.

Cultural control methods:

Bush sanitation: Regularly remove and destroy the newly emerged spotted leaves and buds of infested tea bushes along with the stems by hand to reduce the number of pests. The sections should be kept clean from weeds all around, including drains, so that mosquitoes cannot take refuge in the weeds.

■ **Pruning:** Following a proper pruning cycle can help in removing the infestation, as the more skiff and UP percent is kept in the hope of a larger quantity of leaves, the more mosquito attacks are observed. The problem gets more aggravated by the ongoing changes in climate in recent times.

■ **Leaf plucking method:** Since tea mosquitoes like to suck sap from young tender soft buds, leaves, and

stems, the black plucking method is to be resorted, maintaining 5-6 days of plucking round.

■ **Shade Management:** Proper shade management can help maintain less favourable conditions for tea mosquitoes.

Biological control methods:

■ **Natural beneficial insects:** The presence of natural beneficial insects such as spiders, ants, and some beetles that feed on tea mosquitoes can be provided and encouraged.

■ **Parasitoids:** Use parasitoid wasps that lay eggs on tea mosquito larvae, eventually killing them.

Chemical Control Methods:

■ **Insecticides:** The use of selected PPC-approved systemic insecti-

to take control measures based on pest population levels.

■ **Combination of methods:** Use a combination of cultural, biological, and chemical control methods to effectively manage pest populations.

Methods of rehabilitation:

■ **Fertilizer:** Balanced fertiliser should be applied for the recovery and growth of tea plants.

■ **Soil management:** Ensure proper soil health by maintaining pH levels, organic matter, and adequate moisture.

■ **Foliar sprays:** Use foliar sprays with micronutrients and growth promoting substances to aid the recovery of infested plants.

■ **Mulching:** Mulching can help retain soil moisture and create an environment conducive to root development and plant recovery.

Biopesticides:

■ Use biopesticides that can improve plant resilience and recovery. These may include seaweed extracts, humic acids, and amino acid-based products.

■ Biopesticides can improve nutrient uptake, increase stress tolerance, and promote overall plant health.

By implementing a holistic approach, combining these approaches can help manage tea mosquito infestations and adjustment by restoring tea bushes.

Unfortunately, neither the TRA nor any other research organization knows yet the name of the toxin injected into the tea bush system in *Helopeltis* infestation and to test it with some antidote to further control the level of toxicity. The exact chemical composition of the toxin injected by the tea mosquito (*Helopeltis theivora*) is not well defined in the scientific literature, making it challenging to name a specific toxin.

However, the pest injects a complex mixture of enzymes and toxic compounds that interfere with plant physiological processes, such as growth hormone inhibition and chlorophyll destruction. Thus adopting integrated pest management (IPM) combining cultural, biological, and chemical methods is the most effective strategy. Regular monitoring, timely intervention, and improvement of plant health through balanced nutrition and proper care can reduce damage caused by *Helopeltis theivora* and help recover tea bushes.

Since specific antidotes for toxins are not available, focusing on overall plant health and resilience through these methods can help manage the impact of the tea mosquito. Considering the gravity of the situation and the frustrations of finding no alternatives to revive the potential crop, there needs to be immediate research on this aspect, either by TRA or agriculture research institutions like ICAR or IARI under the Ministry of Agriculture, India.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

— Lao Tzu



Mitigating ill effects of climate change: A major challenge for tea Industry

The tea industry, which has thrived for centuries, is facing significant challenges due to climate change, which has been exhibited mostly in recent times.

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The tea industry, which has thrived for centuries, is facing significant challenges due to climate change, which has been exhibited mostly in recent times.

These challenges include rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events, all of which affect both the quantity and quality of tea production. To ensure the sustainability of the tea industry, both in terms of production and maintaining quality, several adaptive measures can be taken:

1. Climate-Resilient Cultivation Practices:

Diversified crop varieties: breeding or adopting tea varieties that are more resilient to heat, drought, and fluctuating rainfall patterns can help mitigate the impact of climate change.

Agroforestry: Integrating trees into tea plantations can help create microclimates, reduce soil erosion, and provide shade, thereby protecting tea plants from extreme weather conditions.

Water management: Efficient irrigation systems such as drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and building reservoirs can help manage water scarcity during dry spells.

Soil health management: Ensuring healthy soil through organic farming practices, composting, and mulching can enhance the resilience of tea plantations to climate stressors.

2. Sustainable agricultural practices:

Organic and regenerative farming: Reducing the use of chemical inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) can improve soil health, biodiversity, and the long-term sustainability of tea estates. **Pest and disease management:** Climate change can exacerbate pest outbreaks. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approaches, which combine biological controls, crop rotation, and minimal use of chemical pesticides, can help.

Precision agriculture: Using technologies like drones, soil sensors, and satellite imagery can help tea growers monitor plant health, optimise inputs, and minimise wastage.

3. Adapting to market demands:

Focus on quality over quantity: With production volumes potentially declining due to climate issues, tea producers can focus on premium-quality teas, catering to niche markets that value unique flavours and ethical sourcing.

Certification and sustainable branding Certifications like Fair Trade, Rainforest: Alliance, and organic labels can enhance the market value of tea by assuring consumers of environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices.

Diversification of products: Expanding the product portfolio by creating value-added tea products (like tea blends, herbal infusions, or ready-to-drink teas) can diversify income streams and reduce dependence on traditional tea varieties.

4. Collaboration and Research:

Investment in research: Governments and tea associations can fund research on climate-resilient tea varieties, sustainable farming techniques, and climate forecasting tools to support farmers in adapting to changing conditions.

Farmer education: Providing training to smallholders on climate-smart agriculture practices will be key to ensuring that these strategies are widely adopted.

5. Policy and Financial Support:

Government policies: Governments in tea-growing regions can play a key role by providing subsidies for adopting climate-resilient practices, offering insurance schemes against climate risks, and fostering innovation through research grants.

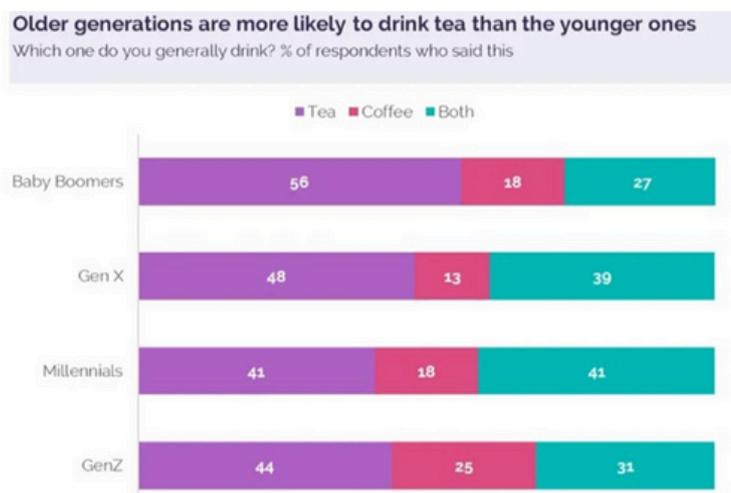
Financial assistance: Access to financial support for small-scale farmers, such as climate adaptation loans or microfinancing, can help them invest in necessary infrastructure and technology to cope with climate-related challenges.

6. Community-led Solutions:

Cooperative farming: Small-scale tea growers can form cooperatives to share resources and knowledge, making it easier to implement large-scale sustainable farming methods and access markets collectively.

Early warning systems: Communities can work together to develop local early-warning systems for extreme weather events, allowing them to prepare and protect their crops.

By combining these measures—ranging from the adoption of climate-resilient farming practices to market adaptations and policy support—it can be ascertained that the dilapidated, old tea industry can better manage the impacts of climate change and secure its future sustainability



Consumer Perception of Tea today.

Thought on required changes in the Indian Tea Industry for a better future?

Sanjib Das

Head Tea Supply chain Operations at Mohani Tea Global Pvt Ltd.
September 12, 2024



Over the past 25 odd years, the computerization and internet (2G, 3G, 4G, 5G, etc.) have continuously been improving the speed of verbal, visual, and virtual communication through television and social media, resulting both positively and negatively on our society. The consumer market is also rapidly being impacted in this changing communication age.

In a way, the consumers are being spoilt by product choice, their pricing, and sales offers by various brands. More than 80 percent of the tea brands that are offered in the Indian market are targeted towards the bottom, or the mass population, where the volume of sales is the highest.

In the absence of a well-planned stringent guidelines for new tea brand launch by any new company or enterprise from the nodal authority **THE TEA BOARD OF INDIA**. There has been mushrooming of new packet tea brands, and unfortunately many of whom are only fly-by-night local or regional operators concentrating in small pockets whose focus is simply profit-making even at the cost of product quality. The growth of these entities in the market is causing:

- **Commoditization** of branded packet tea rather than focusing on brand identity creation. In the general trade, one can find all kinds of sales offers at the cheapest possible rate, thus a consumer **perception** of tea packets as **"cheap beverages,"** especially in the mass price-conscious population. The irony is that the same price-conscious consumer does not hesitate to pay Rs. 10 per 200 ml of branded packaged water bottle. This perception of Tea makes most urban youth asking their girlfriends, **"Let's go for coffee," instead of tea** which is considered a regular, non-trendy, cheap beverage unsuitable for such an occasion? As a case in point, it is pertinent to mention that during the beginning of September 2024, a big national brand decreased their packet MRP for 250 gm from Rs. 55 to Rs. 50 when the tea auction prices showed a huge increase this year against previous year. The rate of growth in production cost of tea at the farm land and the current auction price are totally contradictory. Imagine the message being given to consumers. **This is what needs to change.**
- **Huge pressure to Retain Market share:** In order to retain market share in this hugely price-sensitive mass economy segment, even well-known, established packet tea brands are forced to source teas at viable rates. The availability of bulk tea, especially of average quality, at very competitive and attractive rates is generally abundant in India, primarily from the majority of the bought-leaf factories. This imbalance of supply vs. lower demand automatically retards the tea price for the supply side, and hence the retail pack price does not have to necessarily keep pace with the year-on-year production cost escalation or even inflation. The nodal authority could restrict production capacity increase and have it implemented in true spirit and action post-scientific market research, taking the entire industry in confidence.
- **Breaking the silos:** The various tea industry platforms of producing houses, unions, tea buying associations, and NGO's need to break their respective silos to form a team of unbiased experienced members from across the value to guide the nodal authority on decision making. While some improvements are already taking place, **a faster pace is what needs to change.**

There has been a lot of work already going on in the RTD and OOH tea consumption spaces, and fortunately, new startup companies are doing significant work in the specialty and green tea spaces, which are primarily for the urban, modern trade, and online market spaces for the small percentage of the Indian

population with higher health consciousness and affordability. This is surely a good silver lining in the otherwise very challenged tea industry current scenario.

In order to address the challenges faced by the Indian tea industry and bring about meaningful change in its front line, several strategic shifts and improvements, such as

1. **Create Brand Identity:** The industry needs to shift focus from commoditization to creating strong, differentiated brand identities with focus on the growing young population. This involves emphasizing quality, heritage, and unique selling propositions rather than just competing on price. Shift Focus on Premium Segment from Mass Segment and Change Consumer Perception.
2. **Promote premium and specialty teas,** not just as an everyday beverage but as a luxury or lifestyle product. This could help shift consumer perception and increase willingness to pay a premium, similar to how bottled water or coffee is perceived.
3. **Tighten Regulations:** The Tea Board of India should implement stricter guidelines for the launch and operation of new tea brands. This includes rigorous quality checks and ensuring that new brands especially at the mass consumption segment. Meet certain standards before issuing new licenses to a new packet tea company.
4. **Quality Control Mechanisms:** Establish and enforce quality control measures to prevent the proliferation of low-quality, short-term brands. This will help in maintaining the overall quality of tea available in the market.
5. **Price and Supply Management**
 - **Review Pricing Strategies:** Reevaluate pricing strategies to ensure that they reflect the true cost of production and quality of the tea. This would involve adjusting retail prices to be in line with auction prices and production costs.
 - **Manage Supply and Demand:** Implement measures to balance supply and demand, such as restricting the increase of production capacity based on scientific studies. This will help prevent overproduction and ensure that prices are sustainable.
6. **Industry collaboration and coordination**
 - **Enhance Collaboration:** Foster better coordination among tea producers, unions, buying associations, and the Tea Board. This can be achieved through regular meetings, shared platforms for decision-making, and collaborative initiatives to address common challenges.
 - **Break Silos:** Encourage industry players to work together to address systemic issues and create comprehensive strategies for industry growth and development.
7. **Market expansion and innovation**
 - **Support RTD and specialty teas:** Continue to support and expand the ready-to-drink (RTD) and specialty tea segments. Encourage innovation in product offerings to cater to changing consumer preferences, especially in the urban and health-conscious markets.
 - **Invest in Research and Development:** Invest in R&D to explore new tea varieties, blends, and preparation methods. This can help in creating unique products that can stand out in the competitive market.
 - **Promote Tea Cafes** not only in metros but in all smaller cities and towns similar to the Cafe Coffee types.
8. **Consumer Education and Awareness**
 - **Educate Consumers:** Launch campaigns to educate consumers about the benefits and quality of tea and its various types with its health benefits and diverse uses of tea to enhance its image as more than just a cheap beverage.
 - **Promote Tea Culture:** Work on promoting tea culture and traditions to create a more appealing and sophisticated image for tea.
 - **A govt initiative** to promote tea through national & regional channels with focus to improve the perception of Tea as a trendy beverage for young and old from its current perception.

Let us address these key areas for our Indian tea industry towards revitalizing its market presence, improving product quality, and enhancing its overall consumer perception, especially to attract the growing youth of our country.