

Special emphasis laid on welfare schemes at the 220th Board Meeting of Tea Board

Kolkata, Sep 25: The 220th Board Meeting of the Tea Board, held in Kolkata on 25th September, 2012, took several important decisions pertaining to labour welfare, development of small tea growers, and for streamlining the logo administration process in overseas markets.

Tea Board has been endeavouring to secure better working conditions for the plantation workers and has been supporting several welfare measures through the Human Resource Development Scheme. To this end, the Board has approved a proposal to provide 40% subsidy on the capital investment for piped and metered drinking water schemes, and 70% subsidy for rainwater harvesting projects and storage tanks. A pilot project for supply of drinking water filter to individual households of tea garden workers in Sonitpur district of Assam has also been approved.

Further, the Board has also approved proposals to provide better academic opportunities to the wards of tea garden workers in the form of educational stipend, book grant, coaching and hostel fees for entry at IIT/IIM/Civil Services, provision of bicycles for girl students attending higher secondary schools.

Altogether seven study tours for 126 small tea growers from South India, Tripura, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and North Bengal have been approved at a cost of Rs 25,23,000. Several workshops and field trainings will also be organised for small growers at a total expenditure of Rs 34.75 lakh, with the objectives to improve field productivity, quality of tea leaves and to create awareness on safe and optimal usage of pesticides, weedicides and chemical fertilizers. Resource persons would be engaged from the Tea Research Association (TRA), Assam Agricultural University, tea estates, and bought leaf factories.

With regard to the promotion of tea, the Board decided to waive user fees for the India Tea, Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiri and other such logos to the tune of 1 cent per kg of India teas sold for renewal of license, as the licensees find it economically unsustainable. In order to encourage overseas buyers to use the registered marks for teas of Indian origin, and also to popularise these logos amongst consumers abroad, the Board has decided to grant this waiver for a period of three years (2012-14).

On this issue, the Chairman opined that instead of charging recurring fees for use of logos, Tea Board should concentrate more on quality monitoring and ensuring that only genuine Indian tea is marketed abroad. "All companies using our logos should be made to conform to strict quality standards. We are working towards ensuring strict compliance of these logos so that buyers overseas can distinguish our logos as the hallmark of quality Indian tea," Mr Bhanu informed.