

NETA appeals for Tea Board office shift to Guwahati



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Ritupallab Saikia 8 June 2013 22624 views

Though Assam is the birthplace of Tea in India and about 53% of the country's total tea is produced by Assam alone but still the Tea Board has not been headquartered in Assam and Govt. of India should take steps to shift the head office of Tea Board from Kolkata to Guwahati to serve the greater interest of people connected with tea cultivation, said Bidyananda Barkakoty, Chairman of North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) while addressing its 16th biennial general meeting today.

NETA, a leading tea association in Golaghat, Karbi-Anglong and Jorhat districts and have presence in Nagaon and Dibrugarh districts as well made its beginning at Golaghat in the year 1981, now represents nearly hundred Tea Gardens of Assam.

Regarding NETA's demand for shifting the Tea Board's head office to Guwahati, Barkakoty said that there are five statutory Commodity Boards under the Department of Commerce, Govt. of India – Tea, Coffee, Rubber, Spices and Tobacco. Except Tea Board, all other Boards are headquartered in the State where the product is mainly grown. For example, Coffee Board is headquartered in Bengaluru as Karnataka is the birthplace of coffee in India. In fact, in recent times, an increase in area of tea cultivation is taking place in Assam and other NE States. In other tea growing States of India, it is either stagnant or in a decreasing trend and as per the latest statistics of Tea Board, Assam produces 52.9% of the country's total tea production whereas West Bengal produces 24.8%, Tamil Nadu produces 14.6%, Kerala produces 5.7%, Karnataka produces 0.5% and other States produces 1.4%. Guwahati being the gateway to the Northeast and having India's largest tea auction centre, shifting of Tea Board head office from Kolkata to Guwahati will be a wise decision for the greater interest of the Indian tea industry.

The NETA also urged the Tea Board to make amendment in the definition of Small Tea Grower and to consider one who holds land upto 50.6 hectares as a small tea grower. Presently, as per Tea Board, a *small grower* is one who holds land for tea cultivation upto 10.12 hectares and as a result the the same schemes of Tea Board are applicable for a tea garden of 76 bighas and a tea garden of 12,000 bighas.

It is also informed in the meet that NETA will appeal to the Govt. of Assam to include a chapter in the school textbooks on tea and the health benefits of tea and its role in our economy and society.

The two day meet which is being held at NETA auditorium, Golaghat, around 280 KM from Guwahati, will conclude tomorrow with a tea buyers and sellers meet where Harendra Shah, President of Federation of All India Tea Traders Association will be present as a guest of honour.

Ritupallab Saikia

BY RITUPALLAB SAIKIA

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