

Tea Traders from Gujarat visits Assam



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An interactive meet between the tea producers of Golaghat district and tea traders from Ahmedabad was held on 22 April at Golaghat at the North Eastern Tea Association's (NETA) Auditorium at Golaghat. A 34 member delegation of tea traders comprising of packeteers, retailers, semi-wholesalers, wholesalers, commission agents and auction buyers under the aegis of 'Ahmedabad Tea Merchant Association' are on a five day visit to Assam. For the first time in the history of the tea trade such a big delegation of buyers have come to Assam and met for a direct interaction with the sellers. There has not been much interaction in the past between the buyers and sellers. NETA had organized the interactive meet in Golaghat – the best quality tea is produced in Golaghat and Gujarat is a quality tea market. Tea produced in Golaghat belt is considered the best in the world. The soil and climatic condition of Golaghat district and its neighboring districts – Jorhat and Karbi Anglong districts help in making good quality teas. There is a saying that “one cannot make bad teas in Golaghat belt”.

The per capita consumption of tea in Gujarat is about 1.4 kgs in contrast to the national average of 750 gms. As far as per capita consumption of tea is concerned Gujarat is the fourth highest after Chandigarh, Lakshadweep and Punjab. Gujaratis drink tea with milk and prefer Assam tea – the strong one with full-bodied liquor. About 60% of good quality tea sold at Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) goes to Gujarat.

The interactive meet at NETA was chaired and moderated by NETA Chairman Bidyananda Barkakoty. 34 buyer members of Ahmedabad Tea Merchant Association including its President H.P. Agarwal, Secretary Tejal Shah and Advisor Ashok Relia actively interacted with 60 producer/seller members of Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, Jorhat and Sivasagar districts. The traders group from Gujarat visited a tea estate in Jorhat district and visited Tocklai Experimental Station at Jorhat. They had also visited a tea estate in Karbi Anglong and a bought-leaf factory in Golaghat. During the interaction the buyers said that they were amazed to see tea plantation in a difficult terrain of Karbi Anglong and the amount of hard work by the tea planters to manufacture quality teas. The Seller members tried to impress upon the Buyers that the bought-leaf tea factories also produce equally good teas as the estate factories and therefore it is a myth that all bought-leaf tea factories produce bad teas. The seller members said that the buyers should differentiate good and bad teas and should not have a pre conceived mind of giving low prices to good teas produced in bought-leaf tea factories.

During their visit the delegation will visit J. Thomas, a broker firm in Guwahati, interact with the stakeholders of Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) and visit a tea warehouse. This educational-cum-commercial tour by the traders of Gujarat is first of its kind and Chairman NETA Bidyananda Barkakoty in his concluding remarks said that this is a red letter day for the tea trade and Assam tea industry and hoped that there will be more such interactions between the buyers and sellers which will help in better understanding and increase of trade.

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BY RITUPALLAB SAIKIA

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