

15 DECEMBER



INTERNATIONAL
T E A D A Y

2nd International Tea Day

Brief Report of the International Tea Conference

December 13-14, 2006

Hotel Topaz, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Day 1

A brief overview was given by P. Muthulingam, Director ISD, Kandy on the emergence of the International Tea Day. He read out the message given by the President, Government of Sri Lanka and mentioned that J. John, Executive Director, Centre for Education and Communication was unable to attend the Conference.

Some of the key speakers were Mr. P. Chandrasekaran; Hon. Minister of Community Development and Social Iniquity Irradiation, Shri. Manohar Tirki; Hon. Minister of State of the Government of West Bengal, Mr. Tikiri Kobbekaduwa; Hon. Governor, Central Province, Hon. S. Arulsamy Minister of Industries, Sports, Women's Affairs, rural Development, Estate Infrastructure, Hindu Culture and Tamil Education - Central Province and Hon. L. B. Aluvihare His Worship, Mayer, Kandy. Most of the International delegates including Indian delegates spoke at the inaugural session.

The post-lunch session began with country presentations. Trade union and small tea grower representatives from various countries like India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kenya, Zambia, and the host country Sri Lanka made their presentations on the issues and concerns of workers in the tea plantations and small tea growers. Some of the specific issues with regard to plantation labour were: demand for wage increase as in Sri Lanka the workers were on strike during this period; harsh working conditions like in Malaysia, Zambia where there were no unionization of workers; closed tea gardens in the Indian context; mechanization in the tea sector in Kenya.

In the small tea grower sector some of the major issues were - labour shortage - a predominant factor in case of Sri Lanka; demands were for separate authority for small tea growers in the Indian context. In Zambia small tea growers were not documented.

The house passed a resolution demanding the Government of Sri Lanka and the management of the tea companies to settle the strike immediately by declaring the 'wage increase' to the workers. A two-minute condolence was dedicated to Aggrey Lazarus Mawakajila, Chairman, Rungwe Smallholders Tea Growers Association, Tanzania.

Day 2

All the delegates present gave a brief introduction. Rinju Rasaily (CEC) presented a concise summary of the country presentations made by different representatives on Day 1. A presentation was made by Dr. Mohamed Ziyad (Director - CIC Tea Consultancy and Ex-Director Tea Research Institution) on Challenges face by the Sri Lankan Tea Industry.

Presentations on the study International Commodity Agreement for Tea was made by various countries: India (Sobin George and Rinju Rasaily), Sri Lanka (Prof. Sinathamby), Bangladesh (Tapan Dutta) and Indonesia (Raymond Mundo). The reports presented were to be finalized with incorporation of all the country reports.

Shuna Kee, Programme Officer, Christian Aid office Sri Lanka facilitated the post-lunch session. The delegates after discussion came up with the following objectives for future International Tea Day campaign:

- Ensure a remunerative/fair price for green leaf/ made tea for the producer
- Ensuring decent/living wage and social security mechanisms for workers
- An end to casualisation and contractualisation of regular work
- Increasing contact and solidarity between the consumers and producers

There were number of suggestions as part of future plan of activities. Some of the organizations were of the opinion that they required to get back to their respective organization.

Some of the suggestions that were unanimously agreed were:

1. Hold a seminar with the participation of stakeholders including the government and employers' representatives.

2. Send the proposals or decisions of the conference to every stakeholder in each country
3. Raise awareness among consumers by mobilizing children to campaign in schools in consumer countries through a sticker campaign.
4. Produce a documentary film on tea growing countries internationally
5. Publish a booklet and produce a film on the plight of:
 - a) tea workers
 - b) small tea growers the world over and shown in tea-growing countries and globally (including consumers)
6. 'Lobbying' with ILO to end casualisation and contractualisation
7. 'Lobbying' relevant central, and state governments to end casualisation and contractualisation

Some of the campaign demands or specific objectives for the small tea grower were as follows:

1. Fixing a minimum of Rs 30 per kg (Sri Lankan currency) of green leaf and government to use a stabilization fund to compensate when price falls below 30 Rs per kg
2. Commodity trade agreement between tea producing and tea consuming countries
3. Reduction of operating costs by agencies through government support. This will ensure less deductions are effected on the auction prices thereby achieving reasonable prices for producers

A draft Kandy (Sri Lanka) Declaration was prepared on the eve of International Tea Day Observance. This declaration reaffirmed the principles laid down in the New Delhi Declaration of the 1st International Conference on 15th December 2005. The delegates campaigned for the 15th December to be accepted as the International Tea Day by National Governments, United Nations and other international agencies.

The International Tea Conference and Tea Day Observation in Kandy, Sri Lanka, emphasized on

1. Proposing an International Commodity Agreement for Tea and
2. Shadow International Tea Committee

P. Muthulingam mentioned that the World Social Forum at Nairobi, Kenya 2007 would be another platform to discuss the key issues in the tea sector. The 3rd International Tea Day would be hosted by Kenya.

December 15, 2006

International Tea Day

Rally at Hatton, Sri Lanka

A rally was organized by The Red flag Union, All Ceylon United Workers' Congress, Workers' Liberation Front, Lanka General Services union, National Union of Workers, Plantation Sector Social Forum, Centre for Social Concern, Social Welfare Mandram,

Plantation and Rural Education Development Organization, Uwa Workers Development Fund, Christian Workers Fellowship, Society for Welfare Education on Awareness Training, Commission for Justice, Peace, Human Development and Human Rights Secretariat (SETIK), Upcountry Social Action Centre, Arising Sun Community Development Organization (ASCDO) at Hatton, Sri Lanka. All the international delegates participated in the rally, addressed the gathering and expressed their solidarity towards the workers in the tea plantations of Sri Lanka. Around 5000 people had gathered at the public meeting in Hatton.