

International Tea Day 2016: When is it, and why is it celebrated?

The first International Tea Day was celebrated in 2005, and aims to improve the condition of tea growers and labourers.

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International Tea Day (ITD) has been celebrated every year since 2005 to bring about awareness of issues concerning workers in tea-gardens or tea-estates across nations that are the major tea-growers across the world – like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Uganda and Tanzania.

According to the website of the Centre for Education and Communication:

"On December 15, 2005, tea workers and small growers from 11 tea producing countries from Africa, South Asia and East Asia observed the first International Tea Day in New Delhi and called for the constitution of an International Tea Commission to promote and strengthen the tea industry, which will have specific provisions to protect the interests of tea workers and small growers." Since then, ITD has been celebrated on December 15 every year.

The Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA) says on its website that ITD aims at "affirming the rights of plantation workers and small growers, building awareness and responsiveness among all the concerned bodies, identifying responsible policy decisions, strengthening advocacy and campaigns, facilitating tea consumption and a 'just' trade in tea."

The CISTA website says about the celebration of ITD: "On this day trade unions, workers' organisations and other civil society organisations have been coming together and organising seminars, dialogues, public events and submitting memorandum/charter of demands to the governments." It adds: "Observance of ITD has contributed to the heightened sense of collectivisation among small tea growers in India and strengthened CISTA as the representative body of small tea growers in India."

The aim of ITD 2016 is to get better, regularised and normal wages for workers, including payslips that legitimise their earnings. It also aims to provide housing rights to these workers, many of whom are landless. A third aim is for all government schemes and benefits to reach those who labour in tea estates and tea gardens.