

**Proceeding of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Association
held on 7th January, 2023 at 11.30 am at ATPA Conference Hall, Jorhat**

Member present –

1. Shri Deboshyam Barua, Chairman, ATPA
2. Shri S.P. Baruva, Vice Chairman, ATPA
3. Shri P.K. Bezboruah, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
4. Shri O.P. Chokhani, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
5. Shri A.R. Kasera, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
6. Shri Raj Barooah, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
7. Shri Arun Thekedath, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
8. Dr. Nazrana Ahmed, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
9. Shri Amitabh Barooah, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
10. Shri Amrik Singh, Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
11. Shri Indranil Sarmah, Co-Opted Member, Executive Committee, ATPA
12. Shri A. Bhuyan, Secretary, ATPA

Shri Vivek Agarwalla, Shri Atulit Chokhani, Shri Rohit Kr. Barooah, Shri Raj Kumar Borthakur and Mrs. Swapna Sarmah regretted their inability to attend the meeting due to unavoidable reason. No information is received from other members who were absent.

The chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed all the members to the meeting.

Before taking up the items of the agenda the chairman moved for felicitation to our Senior Member and our Past Chairman Shri P.K. Bezboruah for awarding “Business Excellence Award” presented by former President of India Ramnath Kovind and first lady Smti Savita Kovind for his dedication and commitment in the field of business organised by Pratidin Times in Guwahati and Shri Samudra Prasad Baruva, Vice Chairman honoured him as “Business Icon” of the year 2022 and the award is given by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister, India. Both are being felicitated with a “Fulam Gamusa” and a “Flower Bouquet” on behalf of the members of the association.

All members adopted the resolution with heavy acclamation.

Thereafter the chairman took up the business of the agenda for discussion as recorded below.

Item No. 1: Confirmation of the proceeding of the last meeting of the Executive Committee held on 27/09/2022

The chairman briefly reviewed the last meeting of the Executive Committee and appraised the follow up actions on the minutes of the meeting.

- (i) On the matter of taking legal opinion submitted by Shri Debajit Das, Sr. Advocate, Guwahati the house was not happy with his report and decided to keep the matter in abeyance as CCPA has taken up this issue with ACMS expressing the difficulties of the industry to implement 1969 agreement of permanent work force.
- (ii) On the item of issue of licence for fair price shop, the chairman said that the issue of licence is kept in abeyance as Fair Price Shop Dealer’s Association filed a Writ Petition before the Hon’ble Guwahati High Court on the matter.
- (iii) On the matter of revision of SOP for construction of houses in the garden under PMAY-G scheme, the chairman said that he would take up the matter with the Hon’ble Chief Minister at Guwahati as the earlier representation to the Principal Secretary, Panchayat and Rural Development Deptt., Assam had no action on the same.

Since no other comments has been received from any members, on the last proceedings of the meeting held on 27/09/2022, on a proposal being made by Shri A.R. Kasera and seconded by Shri Arun Thekedath all members unanimously approved the proceedings of the above meeting of the Executive Committee which was forwarded to all members under Memo No. G-3/67 dated 10/10/2022.

Item No. 2: Price hike of natural gas supplied by AGCL

The chairman said that already association submitted a representation before the Hon'ble Minister of Industry and Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam to consider the industry on the price hike with a request to put it under the ambit of the North East policy for subsidy.

Item No. 3: Appraisal of the meeting attended by the Chairman and the Secretary

(i) ATEPFO's Board of Trustees meeting held on 14/11/2022 at Guwahati

(a) Deduction of PF benefit of employees drawing salary above 15,000/- per month

The Chairman informed the house that our Secretary attended the meeting of the ATEPFO's Board of Trustees held on 14/11/2022 at Guwahati as a member of the Board and he requested the secretary to appraise the house the decision of the meeting.

The secretary informed the house about the decision of the Board on deduction of PF benefit of employees drawing salary above Rs. 15,000/- per month and he said that Board advised to follow the rules which allowed to contribute the employer's share only to the employees drawing salary less than Rs. 15,000/- per month but the same was referred to the Govt. for its decision.

(b) Extension of time for granting exemption upto 31/03/2023 under the provision of the Assam Gratuity Act

Similarly extension of time for granting exemption from purview of the Act and Scheme upto March, 2023 to obtain a policy from LIC of India is also discussed as many of the members could not take necessary steps during 2020-22 due to the effect of lockdown for covid pandemic, the secretary said that Board had referred the matter to the Govt. for consider for further extension as it was already given extension twice in the past.

(c) Charging of late fine for non submission of Form I

Again charging of late fine for non submission of Form I and default of deposit of the PF contribution, the secretary informed the house that the matter was taken up in the meeting to consider the waiver of fine and requested to allow to one time exemption till 31/03/2023 but the Principal Secretary suggested to refer the matter to the Govt. for taking decision and advised the board to keep this matter in abeyance till the Govt takes a decision on the same.

Members requested the secretary to write letter to the concerned Govt. Deptt. to know about the present development of the Govt.'s decision on the above matter.

Members also requested the secretariat to issue a circular to the members intimating the relevant rules on the matter of deduction of PF contribution as given in item no. 3(i)(a) for taking necessary steps on the matter.

(ii) Revision of LTA to sub-staff

The chairman said that already an agreement had arrived at on 01/12/2022 enhancing the LTA to sub-staff from Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 5000/- per annum for a period 5 (five) years and circular had been issued from the secretariat on this revision.

(iii) Meeting with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam on 15/12/2022 at Jorhat

The chairman informed the house about the meeting that he had along with the senior members of Jorhat wherein the Hon'ble Chief Minister was appraised about the difficulties faced by the industry to run the garden in view of the present scenario of the industry and requested to give an appointment to meet him at Guwahati for elaborate discussion.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister said to contact Shri Samir Sinha, Principal Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Finance Deptt. to arrange his appointment.

(iv) **Meeting with the ADC, Dibrugarh on supply of Atta to the gardens**

The Secretary who attended the meeting said that the District Administration requested the representatives of the Association to advise their members to supply atta in the garden along with the rice as many of the members are reluctant to lift atta considering the high rate of atta.

Item No. 4: Implementation of Bharat Auction

The Chairman said that Tea Board of India is going to implement the above auction model in North India which became popular in South India. He also informed the house that he requested the Tea Board licensing authority Mrs. Naskar to take up a workshop in Jorhat and Dibrugarh for our member to comprehend the Bharat Auction modalities.

Item No. 5: Implementation of Grid connected Solar Power Plant by APDCL

The vice chairman informed the house that while lauding this initiative by APDCL he feels that the industry will not be benefitted if net metering is not permitted. As per guidelines issued by APDCL only gross metering is permitted under the CAPEX Model, Billing under gross metering will not have the desired impact on reduction in electricity cost. Net metering is permissible under Government of India notification dated 28/01/2021 and also under Government of Assam rules. The vice chairman also said that we should request that net metering be allowed to enable us draw tangible benefits from this scheme.

The members endorsed the view of the chairman.

Item No. 6: CCPA's appeal to ACMS to address productivity related issues and absenteeism of the workers

The chairman informed the house that ITA requested the Association to submit their view on the matter and a profoma has been forwarded to the Association to fill up the same on different productivity issues. The chairman also said that already the Association had given their view on the matter of working hours, absenteeism, attendance, incentive, plucking task, plucking incentive etc. etc.

Shri O.P. Chokhani suggested that the existing plucking incentive is to be enhanced in different slab as under.

- (i) 25 – 30 kg = Rs. 2.00 to be increased to Rs. 3.00 / kg
- (ii) 31 – 35 kg = Rs. 2.30 to be increased to Rs. 3.50 / kg
- (iii) Above 30 kg = Rs. 3.00 to be increased to Rs. 4.00 / kg

Further he said that minimum task to be enhanced from Rs. 24 kg to 26 kg.

The house also decided that all task to be enhanced over the existing one taking the position of the individual gardens.

Item No. 7: AGCL's request for compliance of PNGRB requirement in regard to IPRS

The chairman brought the attention of the members on the AGCL's request to the producers Association to install IPRS and renewal audit and failing of which the AGCL may stop supply of gas and requested the members to suggest accordingly.

Members noted the decision of the AGCL and to consider the statutory requirement.

Item No. 8: Any other subject

(i) Fund position of the association

While the matter was brought to the attention of the members, the chairman sought co-operation from the members to generate fund.

Members held the view that the defaulter gardens should be reminded again to clear their dues on account of their payable subscription.

Members also advised the Secretary to intimate the chairman of each circle forwarding the defaulter list with a request to take up the matter with the concerned member gardens for early payment of the same.

(ii) Enrolment of member for Shantipur Tea Estate

Members advised to consider the application of the gardens to become member of the Association and advised the Secretariat to do needful.

(iii) Virtual meeting to be held on 10/01/2023 on revision of Pay Scale of Sub-Staff

The chairman apprised the house that already the union (ACMS) requested the industry to settle the matter at an early time as the last agreement expired on 31/01/2022. They also demanded for increase of 45% on Basic Pay whereas in the last agreement enhanced the Pay Scale of Sub-Staff at 40% on Basic Pay and 28.9% on Gross Pay.

Members held the view that Staff Pay Scale was revised enhancing 30% on Basic Pay and accordingly the Sub-Staff may be considered upto that level, but negotiation should be started from lower level.

(iv) Appointment of Asstt. Secretary

The chairman said that to fill up the post already advertisement given in the local news paper but no suitable candidate responded our advertisement. Ultimately Vice Chairman recommended the name of one candidate Shri Anirban Chakraborty who showed his interest to join in our Association as Asstt. Secretary who had little experience working in the Tea Association and other fields.

The above candidate was called to our office to take his brief introduction and to have an interview.

Accordingly Shri Anirban Chakraborty met the members and the members have the opinion to accept his candidature for the applied post with effect from 1st February, 2023.

(v) Consideration of salary of the secretary and revision of staff

The meeting considered the secretary's request to revise his salary that he is drawing at Rs. 35,550.00 per month since 2016 and the members have agreed to revise enhancing to Rs. 45,000/- per month including all other existing benefits.

Similarly the demand of the staff for revision of pay scale of the staff was also discussed in the meeting and allowed to draw with immediate effect. It appears presently we require Rs. 1,01,384.00 for monthly payment of staff but on revision it would enhance to Rs. 1,22,009.14 i.e. the additional requirement of Rs. 20,625.14 per month for only staff payment.

(vi) Presentation of Shri Gaurav Gogoi, E-Bay, Germany on selling of tea to overseas buyers through his start-up company ETEAKOL

In absence of Shri Gaurav Gogoi, the presentation could not be done in the meeting and it was decided to request him again to perform the presentation in the next Executive Committee meeting.

(vii) **Fixation of ceiling on Land Holding (Amendment) Ordinance 2022**

The chairman said that the above ordinance which came into force with effect from 16/07/2022, the land retained by the garden may be used for different purposes subject to a maximum of 5% of total garden area.

Shri O.P. Chokhani raised an issue that while making entry of the land records of the gardens in the computer in the Land Revenue Deptt., Assam it appears that the entry made in the computer had several errors and in certain cases the record of Patta's and Dag's were not properly recorded and even part of the same were left out. He suggested to take up the matter with the higher authority to verify the same for necessary correction.

(viii) **Virtual meeting held on 06/01/2023 at 11.30 am conducted by GTAC on implementation of Section 194-R of the IT Act**

The house decided to take a legal opinion on the matter and to follow up the action taken by ITA as they are already on process.

(ix) **Opening of office's twitter account**

Shri Raj Barooah stated that now-a-days the use of twitter is very popular our association should move for its creation.

Members supported the suggestion and advised to do necessary formalities for its operation.

Since no other issues to be discussed, the meeting is terminated with a vote of thanks from the chair to the members and vice versa.

Sd/-
(Deboshyam Barua)
Chairman, ATPA

Memo No. G-3/106 dated Jorhat the 4th February, 2023

Copy is forwarded to –

1. The Chairman, ATPA
 2. The Vice Chairman, ATPA
 3. All Members, Executive Committee, ATPA
 4. All Member Tea Estates, ATPA
- } for information

Sd/-(A. Bhuyan)
Secretary, ATPA