



(L-R): Rohan Pethiyagoda, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board; Ajit Goonetilleke, First Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board; Minister Harsha de Silva; Anil Cooke, Member, Sri Lanka Tea Council and Sri Lanka Tea Board; Minister Navin Dissanayake and Anslem Perera, Chairman, Colombo Tea Traders' Association raise their mugs to toast to the future of Ceylon Tea

The world's first 24-hour tea party toasts Ceylon's golden brew.

Words Yomal Senerath-Yapa | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda

A full century and a half after James Taylor, the Scotsman planted the first tea in the Loolcondra, this evergreen shrub has conquered an immense spread of land, fostering a great legend that is evoked each time one brews a golden cup of Ceylon Tea. Thus, it was fitting that the biggest tea party ever was hosted to mark the 150th year of the beverage, organised by Colombo Tea Traders' Association (CTTA), Sri Lanka Tea Board and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Minister Navin Dissanayake delivers his speech at the event

Spanning 24 hours, the Global Tea Party was held on July 6 at 5pm in every time zone, covering at least 67 diplomatic missions from Japan to South America. Every region in the world was represented, while the most vibrant venues on the party-world-map were the locations where Ceylon Tea is vastly consumed. The potential markets too witnessed some glitzy celebration. The primary goal of the Global Tea Party was to create a newfound appreciation for Ceylon Tea, specially amongst the younger generation.

In Colombo, the core tea party, was at the Galle Face Hotel, itself having just celebrated its 150th birthday and a legend of colonial Ceylon. It was a glittering and impressive evening, the entire tea fraternity turning up in solidarity to mark the triple golden jubilee of the country's most precious brew. Diplomats of the leading tea buying countries in Colombo, officials of high commissions and embassies as well as government officials were also present.



Anslem Perera, Chairman, CTTA addresses the Global Tea Party

The Global Tea Party was the occasion to showcase, to the world, the progress of Ceylon Tea over the years - while expressing gratitude to all who shared this long journey with the stakeholders of the trade. The Chief Guest of the evening was Navin Dissanayake, Minister of Plantation Industries. Dr Harsha de Silva, Deputy Minister of Economic Development was also present at the event.

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Constant messages from the other celebrations around the world were displayed on the giant screen. The Ceylon Tea party spread in all destinations had the same crowning element: two celebratory biscuits produced for the occasion. The Earl Grey and Ginger biscuits, featuring the 150-year trademarked logo of Ceylon Tea, were relished with a range of regional teas, while at each global destination local delicacies infused more spirit. In Frankfurt, for instance, tea was accompanied with kitul hakuru, Palmyra jaggery, and a 'hopper' action station showcased to guests how to prepare the Island's breakfast favourite.

The tea party in Germany continued with pol rotti and curries.



Rohan Pethiyagoda, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board proposes the toast

The evening at Galle Face Hotel was sparkling with the feel of global camaraderie as all the participants could sense that they were part of a worldwide party connected by a hot cuppa; a simultaneous celebration of the prime symbol of our country.

Minister Navin Dissanayake during his speech emphasised on the importance of the Ceylon Tea industry to the Sri Lankan economy. Anslem Perera, Chairman, Colombo Tea Traders' Association, during his address to those gathered read out a letter by HRH Queen Elizabeth II, in which she extended her warm wishes for the future of the Ceylon Tea industry.

In a moment of celebration, the audience together raised their "tea mug", after Rohan Pethiyagoda, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board proposed the toast for the following 50 years of Ceylon Tea .