

## **In a laggard market, Kolkata tea firm bags Rs 12,000 per kg**

By Sutanuka Ghosal, ET Bureau| Aug 27, 2018, 12.58 PM IST

KOLKATA: At a time when orthodox tea prices from Assam have declined by nearly 11 per cent due to uncertainty in the Iran market where these teas make their way into, two Kolkata-based tea firms have been able to fetch significantly higher prices for their produce.

While Rossell Tea has been able to fetch a price of Rupee12,000 per kg for its teas from Dikom tea estate, Mokalbari tea estate, on the other hand, has received a price of Rupee8,001 per kg.

“We have been able to sell 36 kg of tea priced at Rupee12,000 per kg to Raghunath Exports, which they bought for their German clients. The tea had been sold through auctioneer J Thomas and Co and is the highest ever price that any Assam orthodox tea has received till date.

“These are premium golden tip teas and they have buyers in the USA, Germany, Japan, Iran and Russia,” said Indrajit Roy, senior VP (marketing), Rossell Tea, which has seven tea estates within its fold and produces 5 million kg of tea.

Mokalbari tea estate, which is situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra River in Upper Assam, is known for producing golden tippy teas, which form the base of the top East Frisian blends.

“At Mokalbari, the estate has developed a particular species of tea bushes — the green leaves which are essential for production of golden tippy teas. We have sold 30 kg of Mokalbari golden tip teas to Raghunath Exports for their clients in Germany at a price of Rupee8,001 per kg, the second highest price for orthodox teas,” said Surajit Hazarika, president, Paramount Tea Marketing.

Ajay Jalan, managing director, Mokalbari Tea, said, “these teas are made only from soft buds of a special clone tea bush. The cost involved in manufacturing these is significantly high as each stage of manufacturing — right from plucking to packing — requires strict monitoring.”

Roy said that second flush Assam orthodox teas are produced from middle of May to end July.

“There are buyers across the world to pick up the quality orthodox teas. Iran too is a big buyer of orthodox teas,” he said.

Iran annually buys 29-30 million kg of orthodox teas. India produces around 60-70 million kg of orthodox teas.

However, even though some premium quality orthodox teas are fetching higher prices, the average orthodox price has dropped by 11 per cent from last year as Iran is not picking up good volumes.

There's a lot of uncertainty in the Iran market following the US sanctions on the country. In this week's auctions in Kolkata, nearly 30per cent of the teas on offer have remained unsold.

“The Iranian government was supposed to put in place some regulations regarding tea, but that has not happened yet, and is being postponed every week. Payment flow too has slowed down, though it hasn't stopped yet,” said Binod Bansal, a leading exporter of teas to Iran.

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