

## **Kenyan tea still accessing Afghanistan despite Taliban takeover**

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By GERALD ANDAE

### IN SUMMARY

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The East African Tea Traders Association (Eatta) said Afghanistan is still getting the bulk of the beverage from Pakistan, which is the leading buyer of Kenya's tea.

Eatta managing director Edward Mudibo added that there were no reports of payment problems and that tea trade with Pakistan remains smooth despite the melee in next door Afghanistan.

“There have been no disruptions at all on our exports to Afghanistan because exporters are getting their payments well and Kabul itself can get tea from Pakistan because of the open border,” he said.

Afghanistan purchased tea worth about Sh2 billion last year to rank among the top 15 buyers of Kenyan tea. The commodity accounts for more than 50 percent of Kenya's exports to the Asian country.

Kenya's exports to Afghanistan have been falling steadily from highs of Sh14 billion in 2012 to Sh3.6 billion last year, mainly on uncertainty after the US and its Western allies gradually ceded control of the country's security systems to the governments of Afghanistan's two post-Taliban presidents, Hamid Karzai, and Ashraf Ghani.

The retaking of the Afghan capital Kabul by the Taliban a week ago— 20 years since they were toppled from power by US-led forces in 2001—is projected to negatively impact trade with Kenya.

Kenya's other exports to Afghanistan include coffee, mate, spices, pharmaceuticals, rubber, textile, edible vegetables, and machinery.

The decline in Kenya's overall exports to Afghanistan coincided with an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding difficult security, political, and economic transitions which pervaded the country since the beginning of 2013.

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