

Traders cite steady demand for tourmalines in 2017

Gemstone traders and jewellery manufacturers are anticipating stable demand for tourmalines in 2017, thanks to the stone's inherent charm and versatility.

In separate interviews with *JNA*, a number of gemstone specialists and jewellers said rubellites and Paraiba tourmalines will continue to be the top-selling stones, with major markets driving the demand.

Steady market

Yuki Horiuchi, CEO of Japan-based gemstone and jewellery manufacturer Ambrose and Co Ltd, said the Chinese market is expected to fuel activity in the tourmaline sector.

The most sought-after colours are pink, green, blue and yellow. Paraiba tourmaline's entrancing blue hue continues to attract global buyers but strong demand is also pushing prices up, he noted.

"The market has always been deeply interested in tourmalines, which are highly regarded for their beauty, durability and wide variety of colours," the company official said.

Tourmalines are best showcased in pendants and necklaces, according to Horiuchi. "We find that these stones are ideal for pendants or necklaces in subtle yet



Tourmalines from Hong Kong-based Blue Gems Supplier; and Shuja Ulhaq, director of Blue Gems Supplier



Top: Necklace with tourmalines in various colours by Ambrose and Co Ltd. Left: Multi-colour tourmaline necklace by Ambrose and Co Ltd



sophisticated designs. They can also work in statement pieces with bolder, edgier styles," he added.

Shuja Ulhaq, director of gemstone specialist Blue Gems Supplier, also expects robust demand for tourmalines throughout the year.

"Buyers always look for top-quality materials so those products will always sell. The tourmaline business will be very stable this year, which is an improvement from 2016," noted Ulhaq.

Growth will likely come from the US and European markets since the Chinese market has softened a bit, he added. The situation in China, however, is expected to stabilise and consumers are seen to start replenishing their stocks by the middle of the year.

According to Ulhaq, US clients are on the lookout for multi-colour tourmalines, rubellites and Paraiba tourmalines.

"If you offer the right quality and the right price, there will always be business. At the moment, it is tough to get hold of nice-quality goods since the supply is tight so premier-quality stones move fast," he remarked.

Blue Gems Supplier, which is based in Hong Kong, sells its tourmalines for \$3,000 to \$15,000 per carat, depending on the colour and quality.

"The 'useable' size is always in demand. When I say useable, these are the ones that are ideal for jewellery making. Normally those are 1 to 3 carats, or 5 to 15 carats for rings or necklaces. Some jewellers even look for 25- to 30-carat stones, but these are very rare," revealed Ulhaq.

The company's top markets are China, the US and Europe.

"People are interested in tourmalines because they come in many different colours. The prices are reasonable as well," he added.

Paraiba tourmaline

One of the world's leading coloured gemstone manufacturers, Paul Wild OHG described the Paraiba tourmaline "as an independent gemstone because of its outstanding reputation."

"There is strong demand for Paraiba tourmalines all the time. At the moment, prices have been going up because of the shortage in the supply of high-quality Paraiba, regardless of whether those gems are from Brazil or Africa," said company CEO Markus Paul Wild.

The gemstone expert noted that China's demand for rubellite and bicolour tourmaline has declined. The upside, however, is that these gemstones' prices have not increased, he continued. "We'd also like to note that established markets have started buying again," said Wild.

The coloured gemstone specialist is all set to present new layouts for bracelets with large-sized centre stones and earrings in modern designs. "We always produce new designs using gemstones that match



Left: Tourmaline pendant with diamond and pearl accents, and ring with a tourmaline centre stone by Kajita Co Ltd



A butterfly-inspired necklace layout consisting of 74.12 carats of Paraiba tourmalines from Paul Wild OHG

the colour trends of the year," according to Wild. "We also create layouts that use a combination of carvings and faceted gemstones."

One of Paul Wild's exceptional layouts is a butterfly-inspired set made up of nearly 90 carats of Paraiba tourmalines from Brazil in high-quality faceted round, oval and pear shapes. The layout also includes delicately carved gemstones shaped like butterfly wings. The Paraiba tourmalines were not sourced from new production but were collected by the company over several years, he said.

"We always see the Paraiba tourmaline as our 'worldwide star,' its colour is breath-taking," Wild said. The new layout design is a reflection of the company's Garden Paradise theme for 2017.



A butterfly-motif ring layout consisting of 12.14 carats of Paraiba tourmalines from Paul Wild OHG

Jewellery trends

Kengo Kajita, executive director and COO of Kajita Co Ltd, said rubellites both in deep red or pinkish hues are the most popular at the moment.

"We don't foresee any substantial growth or decline in the tourmaline market in 2017. There will be steady demand, particularly for stones of 2- to 10-carat sizes, which are most suitable for commercial-price jewellery," stated Kajita.

China is still the main growth driver. "Since China is the biggest market for tourmalines, Chinese buyers' preferences also influence the latest trends in tourmaline jewellery. We expect tourmaline jewellery pieces in simpler and more subdued designs, which highlight the colour of the stone," he added.

Established in 1920, Kajita Co Ltd is a family-run enterprise that specialises in fine jewellery and other luxury items. Its focus has always been coloured gemstone jewellery, having successfully built its reputation as one of Japan's major industry players.

The company's jewellery products come in 18-karat gold or platinum. It is aiming to tap into potential markets in Asia and the Middle East to further strengthen its global reach. **JNA**