

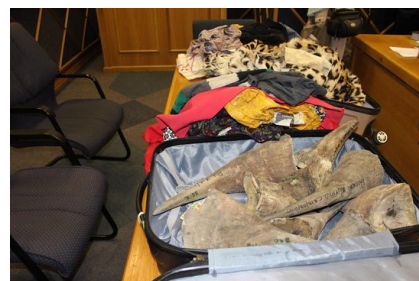


## Chinese rhino kingpin found with gold

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The Chinese national who is suspected of being the kingpin in one of Namibia's biggest rhino-horn smuggling cases was found with gold, bank cards, bank books as well as other suspect items when he was arrested. Wang Huii, who operates an import and export company in Otjiwarongo, stands accused along with three other Chinese nationals Li Xiaoliang, Li Zhibing, Pu Xuexin who all appeared in the Windhoek Regional Court in Katutura yesterday for the continuation of their trial. They have been arrested for trying to smuggle 14 rhino horns worth more than N\$2.3 million and a leopard hide worth N\$50 000 out of Namibia last year. The head of the Namibian Protected Resources Unit, Chief Inspector Barry de Klerk, yesterday testified with regards to the arrest of the four accused. De Klerk said that on the day when Huii was arrested at the Windhoek Country

Club earlier this year they searched a sling bag in his hotel room and found a small quantity of gold, bank cards and bank books. According to De Klerk, Huii explained that his passport was in Otjiwarongo and that he was only in possession of a driver's licence. Furthermore, De Klerk told the court they also found a Chinese driver's licence with a photo depicting Pu Xuexin as well as two relatively recent colour passport photos belonging to Pu Xuexin. "When questioned about this he said he got this from a friend," said De Klerk. Also, when the photo gallery of his phone was searched, pictures of the passports of co-accused Li Xiaoliang, Li Zhibing, Pu Xuexin were found. Again when questioned Huii said he received these from a friend. According to De Klerk, all these items were confiscated and he was arrested in view of the items found in his possession and that he was therefore involved in the crime of dealing in rhino horn and a leopard hide. De Klerk further explained that what led them to Huii in the first place was the viewing of the CCTV footage from the Windhoek Country Club when his co-accused stayed there last year before they were arrested. He said on March 25 last year, he and a colleague went to the Windhoek Country Club where they made enquiries about the stay of the first three accused at the hotel. "We could not find any bookings under the accused's name." The three accused arrived at the hotel on March 23 around midday and left the next morning, said De Klerk. He said upon viewing the video footage it could be detected that the three men were in the company of a fourth person who was later identified as Huii. "We could also detect in which rooms they were staying namely rooms 242 and 243". After revisiting reception they confirmed that the rooms were booked under the name of P. Geng. De Klerk said it became clear from the footage that the suitcase, which contained the rhino horns and leopard hide were also at the hotel and they were also handled by all four accused. This is in contradiction to what Li Zhibing told De Klerk when first interviewed following their arrest. He then said through an interpreter that he received the bags at the airport terminal from a Chinese national whose name he did not know. At this stage De Klerk says Pu Xuexin apparently became very angry and in a loud commanding tone spoke to Li Zhibing in Chinese. "I could see that whatever Pu Xuexin was speaking to Li Zhibing was making him fear Pu Xuexin," he said. Evidence was also given yesterday to the effect of how Huii made a cash payment to purchase the airline tickets of his three co-accused from Namibia to China on the day they were arrested at the airport. ELLANIE SMIT



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