



Wildlife staff run amok in Etosha

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The Minister of Environment and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, was in the Etosha National Park last week and unearthed a range of irregularities. He says the park regulations are not being obeyed. Shifeta stressed that action will be taken against those who do not comply with the rules of the park, but that this action will depend on what rules are broken. He said it is a privilege for anyone to visit or stay at Etosha and the park must be respected. "It is our national heritage." The aim of the visit was to inspect the overall operation of the Etosha National Park and also to visit the Kunene Region to assess the poaching situation in the area. Shifeta says what shocked him most during his inspection was the operation of shebeens and illegal alcohol sales in the park, as well as the number of gambling machines found there. Shifeta said he could not understand how these gambling machines were even brought into the park as all vehicles are supposed to be searched. He said he had received complaints from parents that drugs were being sold to children in Etosha and a person was arrested for selling drugs in the park. Another thing that shocked Shifeta was the number of domestic animals kept by staff members, including chickens and pigs. No domestic animals are allowed in the national park. The minister elaborated on the fact that there was a problem with squatting in the park. He said a directive was issued that park staff may host only close family, spouses and children, who are required to apply for their stay. "No matter whether they want their family to come and stay permanently or on a temporary basis, they will have to apply to stay in Etosha," said Shifeta. He said staff and their homes would be searched to make sure that the rules are followed. "No stone will be left unturned to ensure these rules are adhered to." With regard to poaching in the Kunene Region, Shifeta said more personnel would be deployed to the region as the ministry does not want to move rhino from this area. The vast area is difficult to patrol and has been targeted by poachers. "We will also design some other strategies and make sure enough vehicles are available," he promised. ELLANIE SMIT



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