

Poaching costing country millions – Ndeitunga

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by Staff Reporter



POLICE Chief Inspector General Sebastian Ndeitunga says poaching activities in the country should not be downplayed as it is costing the country millions per day.

Ndeitunga was addressing the Chinese business community in Windhoek on Thursday following the recent arrests of several Chinese nationals carrying various illegal wildlife products.

The police chief's revelation came just two days after minister of environment Pohamba Shifeta said that there was no poaching crisis in the country as only 1,2% of elephants and rhinos are poached per year.

"Some people want to downplay the problem as not serious – it is serious," he said. "I know it is serious because I am the one who deploys officers on the ground on a daily basis and it is costing the police and the country a fortune." He could however not give the amount poaching is costing the country.

Ndeitunga also said he was still perplexed by the police officer who recently allowed 18 rhino horns carried by a Chinese national to go through the security points at the Hosea Kutako International Airport undetected.

"I have tested the eyes of [police officers] for cataracts and they are not suffering from it. The police in South Africa also do not have cataracts, yet they were able to detect the horns," he said.

Ndeitunga warned the Chinese that he would seek the assistance of the Chinese authorities in China to collaborate with the Namibian police in tracking down runaway poachers. "I will not hesitate to give the names of poachers to the Chinese police so that you are welcomed with a red carpet when you get there [to China]," he said.

He also urged the Chinese community to work with police in tracking down poachers.

The police chief asked the Chinese at the gathering why they invited their fellow nationals to Namibia just to come and take prohibited animal products and leave the country.

"You know who they are and you must report them," said Ndeitunga, adding that he was not only preaching to the Chinese community, but to Namibians who are involved in illegal hunting as well.

"It is very shameful that Namibians do not love their protected species, do not report poaching incidents and are involved in their killing instead," he said.

A representative of the Chinese embassy to Namibia, Wu Wei, urged all Chinese nationals to adhere to the laws and regulations of Namibia, reiterating that they should not give their country a bad name. He also said that the solid relationship that Namibia shares with China since the 1960s before and after independence should not be jeopardised because of a few corrupt individuals.