

Rhino horn charge could return after withdrawal

News - National | 2018-03-05

Page no: !



by Werner Menges



A CHINESE resident of Namibia who was charged with the illegal possession of two rhino horns early last year is off the hook – for now at least – after the charge against him was withdrawn in the Windhoek Magistrate's Court last week.

The police's investigation in the case in which Chinese citizens Lu Yonghui (41) and Chen Nan (29) were charged have still not been completed, public prosecutor Rowan van Wyk informed magistrate Vanessa Stanley during Lu's latest appearance in the dock.

Van Wyk added that the police officer in charge of the investigation had in the meantime been posted to the Darfur region of Sudan as part of a United Nations and African Union peacekeeping mission. As a result of that state of affairs, the state was provisionally withdrawing the charges at this stage, Van Wyk said.

Lu would be summoned to again appear in court on the charge once the investigation had been wrapped up, Van Wyk also said. In light of the withdrawal of the charge, magistrate Stanley ordered that the bail deposit of N\$300 000 paid to get Lu released from custody should be refunded to the depositor.

Lu and Chen were arrested and charged on 19 January last year, after police officers had allegedly found two rhino horns in the garage of a flat in Windhoek that was being rented by Lu.

Lu and Chen were kept in police custody for about two and a half months following their arrest. They were granted bail of N\$300 000 each on 4 April last year.

Chen promptly skipped bail and failed to appear in court again in June last year. A warrant for his arrest remains in force, and his bail deposit has in the meantime been declared forfeited to the state.

During their bail hearing, Lu told the court he was a civil engineer by profession, and that he had been living in Namibia for about seventeen years. He was involved in the construction sector in Namibia, he said. Lu also told the magistrate that another Chinese man was actually living in the flat he was renting and where the police allegedly found two rhino horns.

Lu has been represented by defence lawyer Mbushandje Ntinda since his and Chen's first appearance in court.