

Bail hearing for businessman linked to poached rhinos underway

News - National | 2019-04-09

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OUTJO – A bail application hearing for a 35-year-old businessman linked to poached black and white rhinos at a private game farm near Etosha National Park in the Kunene Region is underway in the Outjo Magistrate's Court.

Petrus Shihepo Shimuningeni who owns a restaurant, bar, mini-market and overnight facilities in the Oshana Region between Ondangwa and Ongwediva, wants bail in the matter.

His bail hearing kicked off in court on Monday, and continues on Tuesday.

Shimuningeni was arrested on 10 February this year by members of the Namibian Police Force. He is accused of allegedly having funded a sophisticated and well-calculated rhino poaching syndicate at the private game farm.

Public prosecutor Johannes Kalipi told the court during the bail cross examination on Monday that Shimuningeni and three other suspects aged 25, 32, and 39, also kept in police custody, are linked to the two rhinos which were poached for their horns at the game farm during December 2018.

Kalipi said the poached white female rhino was valued at more than N\$500 000 and the adult black male rhino at N\$800 000.

“Their carcasses were found at the game farm with their horns removed,” he said.

Kalipi said the State has in its possession strong evidence pointing at Shimuningeni allegedly having funded this whole

rhino poaching syndicate, as well as how he paid out cash to the three suspects through an e-wallet banking system.

Shimuningeni allegedly also provided a hunting rifle with 17 live ammunition which were found and confiscated during the police investigations.

Kalipi then opposed the granting of bail to Shimuningeni, saying there is high possibility for him to interfere with the police investigations since he knows the three accomplices.

"The State also fears for his release on bail as there is still another suspect on the run," said Kalipi.

Shimuningeni through his private lawyer, Anna Amupolo, denied any knowledge in connection with the poaching incident the State is accusing him of.

Shimuningeni however told the court that he wants to be out on bail to continue running his businesses as there is no one well-trained to do so on his behalf while he is in police holding cells at Outjo.

The accused also pleaded with the court to grant him bail on grounds that he is the breadwinner of his family.

The four men were arrested on different dates and places.

The other three suspects in police custody last appeared in court on 07 February 2019 when they indicated to apply for Legal Aid lawyers.

Outjo Magistrate Peingondjabi Shipo is presiding over the bail hearing of Shimuningeni. - Nampa