



Businessman denied bail in rhino poaching case

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The bail application of businessman Petrus Shihepo Shimuningeni who was arrested in February this year for alleged rhino poaching, was turned down in the Outjo Magistrate's Court on Wednesday.

Shimuningeni and his four co-accused, aged 25, 26, 27 and 32, appeared before Magistrate Peingondjabi Shipo who denied bail because it is not in the public interest or the interest of the administration of justice for bail to be granted.

Bail was also denied because investigations into the case have not yet been completed and due to the strength of the case.

Shipo postponed the case to 6 May this year.

It is alleged that 35-year-old Shimuningeni along with his four co-accused in December 2018 killed a white rhino cow valued at more than N\$500 000, and an adult black rhino bull valued at N\$800 000 in a private game farm near the Etosha National Park.

During his public hearing, prosecutor Johannes Kalipi informed the court Shimuningeni is suspected to have funded the rhino poaching syndicate. He said if granted bail, the possibility of Shimuningeni committing the same crime is very high.

"The rhino's carcasses were found at a time when they were about to decompose inside the game farm with their horns removed," he said.

He added that a hunting rifle, 17 live bullets and N\$7 000 suspected to have been proceeds of the crime were found during the police investigations and confiscated.

Kalipi further told the court the accused has a strong influence in his community, which he allegedly uses to persuade mostly unemployed men to get involved in committing the crime.

The accused so far has three cases related to rhino poaching pending against him, he said.

Shimuningeni is represented by private lawyer Maria Amupolo, who argued that her client's businesses have suffered losses since his arrest on 10 February 2019 and his family is deprived of their breadwinner.

Shimuningeni is remanded in custody at the Outjo police holding cells along with his four accused.

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BIG BOSS: Petrus Shihepo Shimuningeni, alleged to be a rhino poaching kingpin, was denied bail at Outjo. PHOTO: FILE