

“Poachers roaming Namibian streets freely” – Shifeta

Aili lilonga

THE Minister of Environment and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, has called on the Namibian police to enforce strict bail conditions to reoccurring poachers as many of the wildlife trafficking incidents that have been reported are mostly committed by criminals who have been released from police custody on bail.

He said that because the poaching business is enticing and profitable, many of the suspects commit the same offense immediately after being released on bail as no one is carefully monitoring their movement and whereabouts.

Shifeta added that due to the shortage in investigative officers under the wildlife criminal unit, many of these criminals are released due to the lack of evidence gathered by officers.

“Criminals get lucky and get acquainted because the evidence gathered is not strong enough. Either witnesses do not want to come forth or the investigative officer has too many cases to handle that they do not carefully pay attention to each and every case,” said the minister.

Shifeta was speaking at the Ministry of Environment Wildlife legislation and prosecution workshop held today in Windhoek.

He added that wildlife trafficking has become a multimillion dollar business that has seen incidents increasing every year with foreign nationals at the front line of these criminals activities.

“We need to treat wildlife crime as serious crimes. In the last three years, there has been more than 400 cases that have been reported,” he said.

According to statistics from the Prosecutor-General’s office, out of the 400 cases, 292 are currently on the roll – 140 are old cases from the last quarter and 152 new cases.

The report further revealed that poachers mostly target elephants and rhinos, with areas such as central north, north east, as well as the two Kavango regions the most affected.

“There is a high demand for rhino horns and ivory tusks because it involves big money and complex crime syndicates that know how to infiltrate the system. Several cases of foreign nationals arrested in national parks involved Namibians acting as middle men,” said in the report.

The report also indicated that 41 cases have been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, while three cases were discharged.

“It’s our prayer that during the next quarters, we will have zero acquitted cases. This can only be done if we ensure that investigations are done thoroughly and officers on the job gathered effective evidence,” said Prosecutor-General Martha Iimalwa.



ENFORCING THE LAW: Minister of Environment and Tourism Pohamba Shifeta wants NAMPOL to enforce strict bail conditions given to reoccurring poachers.

Photo: Aili lilonga



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