

Two men nabbed over elephant tusks

News - National | 2019-09-02

Page no: 6



by Adam Hartman



TWO men appeared in the Walvis Bay Magistrate's Court on a charge of dealing in elephants tusks on Monday.

Dirk Vermeulen (41) and Edgar Clarke (51) made their first appearance before magistrate John Sindano.

Prosecutor Tuihaleni Hilikuete opposed bail, stating that police investigations were at an early stage, and that the two men faced a serious charge which could potentially see them sentenced to pay a fine of N\$200 000 or to 20 years in prison if convicted.

The two will be kept in custody until a formal bail application that is scheduled to start on 19 September.

They are represented by Eugene Thomas.

Police spokesperson Kauna Shikwambi said Vermeulen and Clarke were arrested on Saturday at the Gracemere flats at Walvis Bay after they were found in possession of the elephant tusks.

"They tried to sell the tusks to detectives during a joint sting operation by police officers at Walvis Bay and members of the Blue Rhino task team," she said.

About two weeks ago, a 31-year-old Zambian man was arrested at Mukuyu village in the Zambezi region after he was found with one elephant tusk and a rhino horn. He has also been charged with being in possession of controlled wildlife products without a permit.

Nearly a year ago, New Era reported that according to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism Namibia had an ivory stockpile of close to 70 tonnes, which was valued at about N\$126 million.

Of this quantity, nearly 40 tonnes was illegal ivory that had been seized.

Ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda then explained that the value of the ivory was determined on the weight and the quality of the tusk.

Namibia last sold or auctioned off part of its ivory stockpile in 2008.

According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the price paid for ivory on the black market was about N\$12 000 per kilogram.