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Wildlife gets bulk of environment budget

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Zebras grazing at Etosha National Park. Photo: Arlana Shikongo

THE Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism has allocated 36% of its budget to wildlife and protected area management.

This was announced by minister of environment, forestry and tourism Pohamba Shifeta during his budget motivation in the National Assembly on Thursday.

Of the total N\$585 million allocated to the ministry, about N\$208 million has been allocated to this priority project.

Shifeta identified three main strategic interventions to be carried out under this programme, namely wildlife crime prevention and law enforcement, support to communal conservancies and community forests, and the prevention and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict.

“Poaching and instances of human-wildlife conflict continue to be major challenges facing the ministry when it comes to wildlife conservation. However, we are pleased to report progress in addressing these twin challenges,” he said.

The minister explained while poaching incidents of high-valued, specially protected species such as rhino and elephant were reduced significantly, there are still syndicates which are yet to be apprehended.

"More than 1 790 suspects were arrested [between] the end of 2018 up to May 2020. Arrested suspects have doubled since the launch of the anti-poaching unit in 2016," he said.

Shifeta said the ministry will work with stakeholders to ensure there is appropriate human capacity and manpower to fight wildlife crime and provide suitable and sufficient equipment, techniques and supplies.

He said this programme would strengthen surveillance, patrolling and detection, as well as conduct proper investigations and intelligence.

Efforts will also be made to support communal conservancies.

"The main targets and outputs will be to grow income generated for communities from wildlife and forest products, to strengthen governance at the conservancy and community forest level, to create more jobs for rural communities, and to provide game meat for household consumption to rural communities," he said.

Shifeta said interventions for mitigating human-wildlife conflict will include putting down problem animals and assisting communities financially through the human-wildlife conflict self-reliance scheme.

"In line with the revised national policy on human-wildlife conflict management, the ministry will continue to tackle the loss of life and damage to infrastructure, crops and livestock caused by wildlife," he said.

Shifeta said the ministry would support communities with promising mitigation measures in hotspot areas.

This would include predator-proof kraals, protection walls around water infrastructure, alternative grain storage infrastructure, and the installation of elephant drinking troughs.