

## Rhino, elephant poaching cases down

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Namibia has recorded a drastic drop in rhino and elephant poaching cases in the past three years. Photo: Nampa

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**NAMIBIA has recorded a drastic drop in rhino and elephant poaching cases in the past three years because of improved response mechanisms, the government said yesterday.**

Minister of environment Pohamba Shifeta said the country has seen a reduction in rhino poaching numbers from 78 cases in 2018, 49 in 2019 and 17 so far this year.

For elephants, the minister detailed a reduction from 27 in 2018, 13 in 2019 and two so far this year.

"The number of cases continue to go down because of our multi-sectoral anti-poaching initiatives with different stakeholders. We will continue making measurable, tangible and efficient efforts in reducing poaching," he said.

Last week, one suspect was arrested on a rhino poaching or trafficking case, the weekly wildlife crime report issued by the environment ministry revealed.

The report is jointly compiled by the ministry's Intelligence and Investigations Unit and the Protected Resources Division of the Namibian Police.

It also detailed that one suspect was arrested for being in possession of a pangolin and a zebra skin, while two other's were arrested for being in possession of two elephant tusks.

The minister said Namibia's rhinos, pangolins and elephants have been suffering from poaching because of supposed imaginary values associated with their by-products. "Instead of investing in taking care of our resources the challenge is that poachers have an imaginary value that they attach to these animals. However, these values are imaginary. We will continue to work with stakeholders in protecting our wildlife," he said.

In terms of arrests, Shifeta revealed that 89 people have been arrested for rhino poaching-related cases this year. In 2019, 175 rhino-related arrests were made while 109 were made in 2018.

"Fifteen rhino horns were seized this year compared to eight (8) in 2019 and 13 in 2018," he said.

Shifeta revealed that about 30 people had been arrested for elephant-related cases this year, compared to 90 in 2019 and 66 in 2018.

"Thirty-eight tusks and 16 pieces of ivory were seized this year compared to 116 in 2019 and 99 in 2018," he said.

As part of the anti-poaching campaign the government also received a top-range Land Cruiser vehicle from Standard Bank which will be used for patrolling the country's game parks.

Shifeta revealed that the country is also investing in dog patrols in the parks to deal with poaching.

"The Dog Unit is part of our anti-poaching initiatives. We are confident that this has become a formidable unit in the fight against wildlife crime now and in the future, and has contributed to some of the arrests so far.

"They will continue to make a measurable, tangible difference towards augmenting current law enforcement and conservation initiatives," he

said.

Shifeta noted that since the introduction of sniffer dogs to combat poaching in Namibia, wildlife crimes have seen significant reduction.