

## PG revives wildlife crimes case

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Hou Xuecheng

**A BUSINESSMAN whose case involving alleged wildlife crimes was struck off the court roll last week has been summoned to return to the Windhoek Regional Court on the same charges in November.**

The police docket on the case in which Chinese businessman Hou Xuecheng and a Namibian co-accused, Hamutenja Stanislaus Hamutenya, were charged with wildlife crimes has not disappeared as was reported in a daily at the end of last week, the Office of the Prosecutor General said in a media statement yesterday.

The office stated that the docket on the case of Hou and Hamutenya was still at the Windhoek Magistrate's Court in Katutura, whereas the case had been transferred to a special regional court dealing with backlog cases, sitting at the Windhoek Magistrate's Court situated on Judge JP Karuaihe Street.

The prosecutor general's office made inquiries after a magistrate struck the case off the court roll on Thursday last week, and has issued summonses to have Hou and Hamutenya called back to court on the charges they were facing, the office said in its statement.

Hou and Hamutenya are scheduled to appear in court again on 7 November.

Magistrate Leopold Hangalo refused a request from the state to postpone the two men's case, after he was informed that the police docket on the matter was not at court, that no state witnesses had been summoned to be present at court either, and that the state was not in a position to decide if it could apply to have the case of Hou and Hamutenya separated from that of two co-accused who absconded after their release on bail.

The prosecutor general's office also stated that the reason why the docket had not been delivered to the special regional court's prosecutor in time was being investigated internally.

Hou (46) and Hamutenya (42) were charged with one count of dealing in controlled wildlife products and two charges of possessing controlled wildlife products.

They were initially charged with three co-accused – a Chinese citizen, Sha Zhiwei, Indian national Rajaiyah Kumar, and a Namibian citizen, George Mashala – but Sha and Kumar absconded following their release on bail in September 2014, and Mashala has died, the court was informed during 2020.

The state alleged that the five men illegally dealt in four elephant tusks in Windhoek on 11 June 2014.

The state also alleged that Hou, Sha and Kumar illegally possessed a cheetah skin and a leopard skin in Windhoek on 12 June 2014.

After being arrested on those charges, Hou was granted bail in an amount of N\$30 000 near the end of July 2014.

He was again arrested and charged with possession of controlled wildlife products in October 2014, after a pangolin skin, a leopard head and seven zebra skins were allegedly found in his possession at the China Town shopping complex in Windhoek.

Hou was released on bail in an amount of N\$100 000 following his second arrest.

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