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MEFT records confiscation of 18 pangolin skins

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WINDHOEK: The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) has recorded a total of 18 pangolin skins, 12 live pangolins and 146 pangolin scales that were confiscated between September and November this year. This is according to the ministry's spokesperson Romeo Muyunda, who in a press statement on Monday said as a result 23 criminal cases have been registered and 38 suspects arrested. These numbers, Muyunda said surpass that of elephant and rhino combined for this period and are predominantly from the northern regions with Kavango West having the most cases registered at six, followed by Kavango East, Ohangwena, Oshana, Zambezi regions with three cases registered each. The central regions cumulatively registered four cases, while the Kunene region only registered one case. 'Prior to September, there had only been a total of six live animals recovered and 19 skins confiscated from January - August 2023. In association with registered crimes, the total animals poached this year between live animals, skins, and scales comes to 50, with an additional two fetuses miscarried by live confiscated female pangolins,' Muyunda said. He noted that although the ministry is pleased with the arrest of suspects, the arrests are indicative of an increase in crimes involving pangolins, which is a concern. 'Pangolins are under serious threat and the Ministry would like to remind the public that the trafficking of wildlife is a serious offense, and you will be arrested and sentenced for this crime,' he cautioned. To date, the heaviest sentence for the trafficking of a pangolin or its parts was nine years direct imprisonment, and the heaviest fine was N.dollars 800 000. Pangolins are protected under the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, as amended by Act 3 of 2017 and the Controlled Wildlife Trade and Products Act 9 of 2008 as amended by Act 6 of 2017. In Namibia, the possession of a pangolin or its parts carries the same maximum sentence as for rhino horn, up to 15 years imprisonment and up to N.dollars 15 000 000 fine. The trafficking or sale of pangolins carries a sentence of up to 25 years imprisonment and N.dollars 25 000 000 fine, Muyunda said. Source: The Namibia Press Agency

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