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The trio tried to sell elephant tusks to undercover law enforcement agents. Photo: SAPS

## Bail denied for trio arrested for being in possession of elephant tusks

By Jonisayi Maromo 3h ago



Pretoria - Three men arrested by the police in Limpopo as they attempted to sell elephant tusks valued at R168 000 to undercover law enforcement officers were on Monday denied bail by the Polokwane Magistrate's Court.

Limpopo police provincial spokesperson Colonel Moatshe Ngoepe said the trio were arrested on Friday at Savannah Mall and were allegedly in possession of elephant tusks.

"David Mathonsi, 31, Raymond Move, 33, and Ben Shiburi, 36, were denied bail and their case was postponed to next week Tuesday, 02 February 2021 for bail application and further police investigations," said Ngoepe.

"Members of the endangered-species unit in Limpopo, K9, crime intelligence, Ledet (Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism), and Kruger National Park's crime investigation unit (ECI) arrested three suspects aged between 31 and 36 for possession of elephant tusks on Friday 22 January 2021, around 10.30am at Savannah Mall in Polokwane," Limpopo SAPS spokesperson Colonel Moatshe Ngoepe said.

He said the trio, who were travelling in a grey BMW, were found in possession of four pieces of elephant tusks with an estimated value of R168,000.

"The suspects were immediately arrested," said Ngoepe.

Meanwhile, 36-year-old Kelvin Chigwede, who is in police custody, was on Tuesday scheduled to return to the regional court in Kempton Park in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, on a charge of illegally dealing in rhino horns.

Gauteng Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) spokesperson Captain Ndivhuwo Mulamu said the rhino horns were disguised as chicken feed and destined for Malaysia.

"In December last year, the Hawks' serious organised crime (unit) in Germiston, Benoni SAPS, and the South African National Parks (SANParks) followed up on intelligence regarding a consignment declared as chicken food mixture, packaged in a blue geyser at a warehouse in Kempton Park, containing rhino horns weighing about 72.4kg," said Mulamu.

"It is alleged that the consignment was intercepted by authorities after being dropped off at a warehouse on the same day. During an investigation, it was discovered that it was destined for Malaysia."

Earlier this month, Mulamu said, further investigations led authorities to a residence in Benoni, where a search warrant was executed.

"Upon searching the premises, authorities found about R500,000 in cash and it was seized for investigation purposes, since it is suspected to be the proceeds of illegal dealings."

Mulamu said Chigwede was arrested immediately and charged with illegal dealing in rhino horns and contravention of the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (Nemba).

"The case was postponed to 26 January 2021 for a formal bail application," Mulamu said.

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