

Govt acts to stop illegal lithops trafficking



By Martin Endjala

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The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has intensified efforts to curb the illegal harvesting and trade of Namibia's iconic lithops plant, warning that the highly sought-after succulents are increasingly targeted by organised wildlife trafficking networks.

Lithops are desert plants, also known as 'living stones' or 'pebble plants'.

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The ministry says illegal collection threatens the survival of the slow-growing plants, which are endemic to Namibia and protected under national legislation and international conservation agreements.

Lithops are prized by collectors worldwide, making them vulnerable to poaching and cross-border smuggling.

Environment minister Indileni Daniel told the parliament on Thursday that Namibia has strengthened monitoring, law enforcement and international cooperation to combat the illicit trade.

"The ministry works closely with the police, customs officials and conservation partners to prevent illegal harvesting and exports while protecting the country's biodiversity," she said.

Daniel said wildlife inspectors regularly conduct compliance inspections and confiscate illegally collected plants where necessary.

She said border posts are monitored to detect and prevent the unlawful movement of protected species.

Investigations involving the ministry's wildlife protection division, the police and international partners have uncovered cases linked to illegal exports of lithops, Daniel said.

Namibia is also collaborating with research institutions to improve propagation methods, reduce pressure on wild populations and support conservation initiatives.

She said no legal export permits have been issued for wild-harvested lithops, while artificially propagated plants may only be exported under strict permit conditions.

Daniel said protecting Namibia's unique plant species requires continued enforcement, public awareness and international cooperation to ensure illegal wildlife

trafficking does not undermine the country's natural heritage.

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