

Rhino kingpin in court

"Real Men don't Shoot Rhinos"

The bail decision for the alleged leader of a rhino poaching syndicate would be announced on Thursday, the SA Revenue Service (SARS) said on Wednesday, 31 August 2011. Chumlong Lemtongthai (43) appeared on Wednesday in Kempton Park Magistrate's Court. He last appeared in court on 22 July, said spokesperson Adrian Lackay on Wednesday.

National Prosecuting Authority prosecutor Allen Simpson said that invoices from Lemtongthai's company, Xaysavang Trading Export Import, should be taken as part of the charge sheet. The amounts reflected on the invoices indicated there was a monetary offence involved and therefore it should be seen as a schedule five offence. Schedule five offences require that evidence be presented to support the bail application.

Lemtongthai was arrested after John Olivier, a Thai Airways manager who allegedly worked with the syndicate, decided to inform authorities of the syndicate's activities. Olivier told police that a game farmer, Marnus Steyl, would apparently source rhinos for "canned hunting", and then inform Lemtongthai.

Lemtongthai then allegedly contacted Punpitak Chunchom, telling him that "hunters" were needed to shoot these rhino. Chunchom – who has since left South Africa after pleading guilty to illegal possession of lion bones – would recruit Thai strippers and prostitutes to pose with the rhino carcasses. Lemtongthai allegedly organised permits and covered the costs of the operation.

The horns would be dried and 'sold' to front company Xaysavang Trading Export Import – owned by Lemtongthai – for about R65 000 per kilogram. They would then be sold on the Asian black market for between \$35 000 (about R247 900) and \$55 000 (about R389 600).

By this method, loopholes in legislation allowing 'trophy hunting' and regulations limiting hunting to one rhino a year per hunter were exploited to supply rhino horns.

Lackay said it was this aspect of the case that concerned Sars. Lemtongthai was the only member of the alleged syndicate to be charged.

Gender and environmental activists gathered at the court ahead of Lemtongthai's bail application. The ANC Women's League displayed placards reading "Real Men Don't Shoot Rhinos".

They wore green tape over their mouths in protest against the role Thai prostitutes were allegedly forced to play in the syndicate's activities. An animal rights group held up gory pictures of butchered rhino carcasses.

In the meantime, another pregnant rhino was poached and dehorned on a game farm between Roedtan and Zebediela in Limpopo on the 30th of August 2011. According to the report, the rhino was shot several times with a R4 rifle. Another rhino carcass was also reportedly found on the farm. Only last week, two rhinos were shot and killed and their horns removed on a farm outside Mokopane. This indicates that about 280 rhinos had been killed so far this year.



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Mayoral Imbizo gathers momentum

**Rustenburg
Local Municipality**



The Executive Mayor of Rustenburg, Cllr. Mpho Khunou, had the opportunity to explain the policies being implemented by his municipality at the Thethe High School on August 23 as the Mayoral Imbizo starts to gather momentum.

Addressing residents, Cllr. Khunou – who was flanked by MMC for Infrastructure and Technical Services (ITS) Happy Serongwane and other councillors – said it is unacceptable that the city should face high unemployment rates despite producing about three quarters of the world's platinum.

Cllr. Khunou called upon the mining sector to contribute more towards creating jobs in the city as the mines are benefiting immensely from their operations. He said, "We are saying that the mines, which are doing business here, are benefiting from our resources so they should explore ways of plough-

ing back into the community in a bigger way. They can play a huge role in terms of creating employment."

Residents also had the chance of explaining to the mayor some of the challenges that they are facing in the area.

"We are very happy that you came to spend some time with us," said Mpho Mphutle. "We would like our councillor to be more visible. He should be in the forefront of coming up with projects that benefit the community because this is why we have elected him," she added. In his address to the residents, MMC Serongwane said his department would leave no stone unturned in assisting the people to realize their dreams.

"I would like to encourage all those with project ideas to come forward and let us know so that we can assist them. This is why we are here," he said.

Executive Mayor of Rustenburg Local Municipality, Cllr. Mpho Khunou

MMC for ITS, Happy Serongwane

MMC T. Maifala