

# The Livingstone Weekly

10 February 2013

Dear All

My header is Etosha Pan with some posing giraffe. More of the story later ...

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## LIVINGSTONE

### VEEP MEETS LIVINGSTONE BUSINESS PEOPLE

Clare Mateke

Vice President, Dr Guy Scott, on 9th February met Livingstone business people at Chrismar Hotel to talk about trade and tourism. Over 150 people turned up for the meeting, including those involved in hotel and lodge managers, tour operators, small scale business people, artists, musicians, farmers, government representatives, etc. The Vice President was accompanied by Tourism and Arts Minister Sylvia Masebo, Southern Province Permanent Secretary, Dr Chileshe Mulenga, and Livingstone City Council Town Clerk, Vivian Chikoti. PF parliamentary candidate for Livingstone, Lawrence Evans, was also present.

In his opening remarks, the PS pointed out that the Patriotic Front Government was not only concerned about the poor, but also the business sector. His remarks were followed by those of Sylvia Masebo, who said this was a chance for the Vice President to interact with the business community as we do a count down to the UNWTO Conference in August. She said that in preparation for the conference, road works had started and some money had been released to improve the water and sanitation system. Various other issues were being addressed. She pointed out that in Zimbabwe the Government had partnered very effectively with the private sector in preparing for UNWTO, and she hoped the same could happen in Zambia.

Dr Guy Scott then spoke briefly, encouraging participants to feel free and ask about any issues affecting the business community. He said he was interested in what Government could do for the private sector and what the private sector could do for the government, particularly in connection with the UNWTO.

After the brief remarks the meeting was opened up for questions. The following are some of the issues that were raised:

Mwape Walumba from Lion Encounter – The roads are pathetic. We can provide fuel but have no graders. Can someone please provide graders? Answer from TC – two graders have been acquired under the roads project. The roads project for UNWTO will be doing 52 km of tarmac, including Mosi-o-tunya Road.

Benjamin Mibenge from Wildlife Society – A big billboard at the airport welcomes visitors to Mosi Beer. Could the same company please sponsor a sign welcoming visitors to Livingstone and the Victoria Falls instead? Answer – The Local Organising Committee (LOC) will look into this issue.

Felix Daka from Cross Border Traders Association – Loan facilities are not reaching small-scale traders, who are also facing competition from foreign small-scale traders. Can anyone help?

Michael Mubita M, small-scale trader and artist – Zambian TV advertises many other countries but does not do enough to advertise itself. Further, craft sellers have to compete against big hotels, who sell foreign crafts to their visitors. Answer – the VP said that supporting local artists and craftspeople was very important and there were certain things the government needed to do in connection with this. He said hotels should be encouraged to display local art works instead of foreign ones. He said the policy on hotels selling crafts was under review. The issue of hotels importing foreign crafts was a serious one and should be addressed

Andrew Murrin from Green Tree Lodge – Can we do something about reducing or removing visa fees? They are putting visitors off coming to Zambia because they are too high. Answer from Minister of Tourism & Arts – the issue of visas had been raised by the Ministry and been handed over to the Ministry of Home Affairs. There was need to see if some visas could be reduced or done away with completely. She said that Zambia is still one of the most expensive tourist destinations and that the visa fees tended to be a hindrance rather than a benefit. She said the issue of RTSA charging vehicle fees at the borders was unique to Zambia and was also an issue to be looked into. She urged the business community to keep reminding government of these issues.

Peter Jones from River Club – Thanked Government for tax incentives in connection with UNWTO.

Concerned about heavy trucks that were damaging the roads in Livingstone. Is anything being done about a bypass? Answer from Town Clerk – This is a long term plan, but not part of the 20 roads being done for the UNWTO. But it was important and should be dealt with at the next meeting of the LOC. Perhaps could gravel the bypass.

Guy Scott pointed out that many of these were local government issues. He said that there was need to have regular meetings with local government officers.

Mr Walumo from Mukuni Market – Government promised to build a modern market and plans are ready. When will the funds be released? Answer: Contractors for the bus stop and the modern market were being selected this week.

William from a car hire company – How can we benefit from the tax benefits on tourism vehicles if we cannot get loans to buy the vehicles?

Senga Chashi, Musician, Zambia Association of Musicians – Musicians in Southern Province have been neglected. What is government going to do to support local musicians? The LOC should involve local artists and musicians, particularly youths.

Alexander Mutale from LTA – How far has government addressed the issue of yellow fever vaccination requirements? Answer from Ms Masebo – Government is very concerned about the Yellow Fever issue. The Ministry is working on it. This issue should be raised next week when several government ministers would be meeting in Livingstone to discuss the UNWTO Conference.

Alan Mulenga from Muvi TV – Can government allow private local broadcasters to cover the UNWTO Conference, rather than foreign ones? Answer from Ms Masebo – Muvi TV should join the Sub Committee on publicity.

Yataba – What is government doing about street vending? It is getting out of hand. Answer from Ms Masebo – Street vendors have been engaged on a UNWTO Committee and they are very understanding and agreeable to suggestions.

Nicholas Katanekwa, past chair of LTA – Can we reduce border controls to allow visitors to see both sides of the Falls without having to go through customs and immigration? This would allow visitors to see water in the Falls even when it is dry or nearly dry on the Zambian side. Secondly, can we agree on a way of jointly sharing the delegates for the UNWTO between Zambia and Zimbabwe? Ms Masebo answered that the issue of immigration was complicated and could not be dealt with in a day.

Ms Masebo appealed to the business community to help make Livingstone truly a tourist capital.

Dr Guy Scott said the issues of visas and yellow fever had to be resolved before the UNWTO. He said there had been no case of yellow fever in Zambia for 67 years and that only one country required yellow fever certificates for people travelling from Zambia. He said the issue was being addressed.

Dr Guy Scott pointed out that the office of the Vice Presidency strangely has the power of convening meetings where people talk. He urged people to talk with each other even when he was not present. He said he would return in two weeks and would be happy to call another meeting if people wanted it.

Ms Masebo said that there was a team of government ministers meeting in Livingstone the coming Tuesday and suggested a joint meeting be arranged with them and the business community to deal with some of the issues raised. She said the meeting would be arranged for Tuesday or Wednesday.

Dr Scott said he had to leave, but proposed that the group remain behind to come up with a list of priority issues to be presented to the Ministers. So after two hours with the Vice President and Minister of Tourism and Arts, a fair number of people remained behind for another two hours or so to produce a priority list of issues to present next week.

Some of the issues brought up in the second part of the meeting were:

- provision of emergency health services during UNWTO
- funding for loans for small-scale businesses
- visas – reduce them, make available at point of entry, payable by card, remove multiple entry requirement
- RTSA fees for vehicles at borders
- information dissemination – should be positive and patriotic
- make resources available for local media
- development of Livingstone airport
- incentives for training and development
- coordination between government bodies like NHCC and ZAWA to avoid double charges
- reduction of charges for various services to reduce tourism costs
- facilities for people with disabilities
- lower the tourism tax rate, as for mining and agriculture
- reduce charges at borders
- address yellow fever certificate requirements
- create bypass for Livingstone
- allow more airlines to fly to Livingstone
- regulate tourism training in local colleges to improve standards
- address issue of load shedding
- include curio sellers in the UNWTO programme
- allow taxis to enter the game park
- need a recycling centre for Livingstone
- need public conveniences in town
- organise a fashion show for UNWTO
- improve water and sanitation facilities
- improve local information flow about UNWTO
- decentralise issuing of tourism licences
- improve times and frequency of flights between Lusaka and Livingstone
- city dump site harbouring criminals
- address issue of street sellers as they are making the town dirty and difficult to walk along corridors
- blocked drains need addressing

I left the meeting before the priorities were arrived at, but it was pretty clear that some of the important issues were visas, yellow fever requirements, tourism costs, roads and making a clean and tidy city that

would be welcoming to foreign visitors. Another important issue was information flow, as there seemed to be not enough sharing of information concerning preparations for the upcoming UNWTO conference.

All in all, I think it was a good meeting. Even if not all the issues were addressed, it provided a good forum for people to raise pertinent issues and learn a bit about what was or was not being done to address them, or who should be addressing them.

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## PRESS AND NEWS RELEASE

The Livingstone Tourism Association (LTA) held its Annual General Meeting Fallsview Lodge in Livingstone on 7th February 2013.

The outgoing Chairman Kingsley Lilamono highlighted some of the areas that the LTA had embarked on, during the past year, which included the establishment of a working relationship with the Livingstone City Council as a major partner in the development of Livingstone. In addition to this he emphasized the importance of all stakeholders to become involved in the Tourism Policy review which was recently launched by the Minister of Tourism and Arts in Lusaka. This formed the basis of tourism development for Zambia and would be the platform from which the tourism levy would be determined and a definitive proposal needed to be made to the Ministry. He further went on to say that ZAWA were in the process of moving the park entry gate near to Chrisma Hotel and he urged that there be positive consultation with stakeholders so that this move was not detrimental to tourism for Livingstone. He reminded the membership that 2013 was also an extremely important year for Livingstone with the co-hosting of the UNWTO with Zimbabwe and it was necessary that challenges faced by the local organizing committee be met and that all stakeholders should work together to ensure the success of this congress.

During the meeting a new Executive Committee was elected and the Board members for 2013 are:

1. Active Monze - Chairman
2. Alex Mutali - Vice Chairman
3. Graham Nel - Treasurer
4. James Mwanza - Secretary
5. Kim Phippen - Board Member
6. Sonja Clay - Board Member.
7. Kalinda Hamambwe - Board Member
8. Joyce Sikabbuba - Board Member.
9. Michel Musenga - Board Member
10. Kingsley Lilamono - Board Member

In his remarks as the new Chairman of the LTA, Active Monze reminded the membership that the existence of LTA is to benefit the tourism industry in the country as a whole, with Livingstone being the gateway for the rest of the country. Tourism is the major economic driver for Livingstone city and its residents. The success of tourism in Livingstone will spread to the entire country and promote sector growth. He further urged members that the success of the Association is through unity and that everyone should strive to introduce at least one new member to the Association. He encouraged the members to work hard and participate in LTA activities and promote the destination as and said that he was looking forward to the challenges that lay ahead in striving to promote Livingstone as a preferable Tourist destination in Central Africa.

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## Rain and High Water

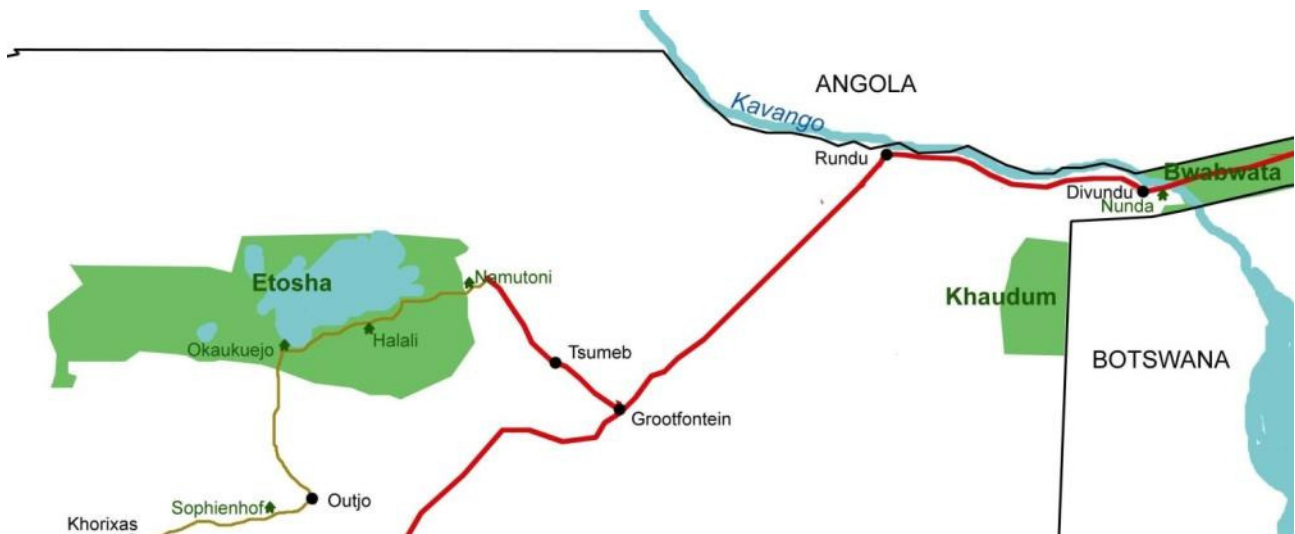
We have been having lots of rain this week. The Zambezi is high already. But more water is on the way: *Learners at some of the 21 schools in the flood-hit Kabbe Constituency in the Caprivi Region are accommodated in makeshift shelters on school premises after the rising Zambezi River cut off most villages from schools.* (From New Era)

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## Etosha National Park

It was January. Rain had been falling in Livingstone and around so we had planned a trip west into Namibia where the rain is less and we hoped for a dry trip. We were travelling this day from Nunda Lodge near Divundu on the Kavango River to Etosha – a trip of 600 km. Travelling in Namibia is a breeze; the roads are good and there is excellent signage to tell you where you are going and how far there is to go.



We passed Rundu without a stop and reached Grootfontein for a bit of a shop. We needed camping gas and I was sure we could find some, and we did. The only thing that I found rather disconcerting was the warning by a couple of shop assistants to watch out for a gang of thieves. Apparently they target strange vehicles and steal from the occupants. Grootfontein seems such an orderly town I found it odd that they would not deal with unruly elements. Anyhow, we had no incidents and were on our way to Tsumeb and then Namutoni, Etosha.

Etosha National Park is Namibia's jewel and they take excellent care of it. The roads are all dirt within the park but they are in good condition and 4x4 is not necessary. There are three camps to stay at – Namutoni, Halali and Okaukuejo. Each camp has a campsite and lots of chalets. I suppose you could compare it with Hwange.



When we arrived at Namutoni I went to book in and had a panic attack. I had changed money in Katima – US\$500 and thought that it would be enough to take us for a few days. In fact I had none left to pay for the accommodation and had to use my credit card. I think this is my only complaint about Namibia's tourism. Visitors can use Namibian dollars or South African Rand but no other currency. In Etosha there was no bank or ATM; there was no bureau de change, of course (because there are none at all in Namibia).

Anyhow we had to change our plans dramatically. Not only could we not change



our US dollars but we had used more money than I had anticipated – most of it, of course, had been on fuel – we had already driven over 1,200 km from Livingstone and we still had a long way to go.

We pitched our tent on the huge campsite. Again we had our own electric point, tap, rubbish bin, bench and chairs. There were only a few people in the campsite, but a group arrived back from their tour of the park – children, adults and sub-adults. And they proceeded to laugh and chatter until midnight ...

The following morning because of our financial dire straits we planned to drive through to Okaukuejo and out of the park so that we could get to a bank. It was do-able. We packed up and took a look at Namutoni Fort.

### ***A bit of Namutoni History***

*Fort Namutoni came into being in the 1890s when rinderpest was rife in the north of the country. The Germans were, at that time, in control of Namibia (then South West Africa) and they put up a series of posts across the country to keep infected cattle from moving south. Namutoni had for many years been a stopover for travellers because of its spring; the first known white travellers were Francis Galton and Charles Andersson in 1851.*

*At the end of the rinderpest epidemic Namutoni Fort continued to be used by the military where a few officers were stationed to keep in eye open for smuggling of arms and alcohol. The basic huts were replaced with burnt brick buildings around 1902.*

*In January 1904 there were 7 soldiers present at the fort when it was attacked by 500 Ovambos. The German soldiers managed to keep the attack at bay until night-time when they snuck away under cover of darkness. The fort was totally destroyed by the Ovambos. By the end of 1904 the fort was being rebuilt – a much larger structure – the basis of the one we see today.*

*At the end of the First World War the fort was abandoned and left to decay. It was saved from demolition by the Monuments Commission which was set up in 1947 who decided that the fort should be declared a National monument and preserved. So, in 1950 plans were made to renovate the structure and to make it available for the tourist trade. In 1958 the fort became the property of the Parks Authority.*

Having taken the necessary photos we started on our trek into the park. The road winds its way along the side of the pan and the scenery, although seemingly bleak, is stunning. On the left was the pan with its heat hazes and some water (difficult to tell at times which was which) and on the right low scrub. The wildlife is so accustomed to vehicles and people that they merely watched us as we watched them.







We saw lots – gemsbok, springbok, giraffe, ostrich, korhaan, hartebeest, zebra, ... The drive was around 160 km and we enjoyed every minute of it – the wildlife, the scenery, everything ...



We stopped off at Okaukuejo to have a look and treat ourselves to an ice cream and then hit the road out, but before we arrived at the park gate we had the surprise of our lives ... a rhino! What a treat.

From Etosha we headed towards Outjo to get some money and fuel. We arrived ... but had not realised that it was Saturday and all the banks were closed! Credit card again at an ATM. One thing which is very handy and thoughtful for travellers is the most petrol stations have ATMs. Great idea.

That night we stopped at a camp just outside Outjo called Sophienhof. We were the only campers there and had the place to ourselves.

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## ZAMBIA

### The Kwacha is under pressure

From the Zambia Weekly

The Bank of Zambia (BoZ) plans to sell more dollars to bolster the Kwacha, the second worst performing currency in Africa, having slumped 9.6% against the dollar in the past six months (only Malawi did worse) – and curb inflation. The Kwacha needs to be at a “more realistic” level, Governor Michael Gondwe told Bloomberg.

BoZ has already reduced foreign currency reserves by \$36 million this year to support the Kwacha, as policy makers are struggling to halt its slide on the back of declining foreign investment and the rebasing of the Kwacha. Rising food and import costs prompted BoZ to raise interest rates and increase the reserve ratios for commercial banks in the past four months, undermining economic growth.

Finance Minister Alexander Chikwanda said the weaker currency may lead to an inflation spiral and boost government’s debt costs. The kwacha should trade at 5 to 5.10 a dollar to hold back inflation, he said. According to BoZ’s economic director, Emmanuel Pamu, the Kwacha’s slide is mainly due to a lack of liquidity in the foreign currency market. Zambia’s current-account deficit of \$211 million last year, compared with surpluses in the previous three years, has contributed to the weaker Kwacha, he said. The shortage of foreign currency may be due to mining companies withholding dollars, and BoZ therefore intends to meet with them, explained Gondwe.

Deputy Finance Minister Miles Sampa told the Post that the slide was “artificial”, being manipulated by “speculating commercial banks holding on to long-term foreign exchange positions to enhance their profits”.

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## ZIM-ZAM

### Kariba Dam

The gates at the dam will be opened in March. The notice says that up to three gates will be opened. Anyone living downstream of the dam wall should be prepared and move to higher ground where necessary.

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## ZIMBABWE

### Rabies Vaccination Campaign

The VAWZ team in conjunction with the Division of Veterinary Field Services (Hwange) recently conducted a Rabies Vaccination Campaign in Victoria Falls. After complaints of stray dogs in the area having attacked and killed wildlife (in the town centre) , harassed local residents and their pets as well as tourists, VAWZ, together with Victoria Falls Animal Welfare (VFAW) and Wild Horizons Wildlife Trust, formulated a plan to deal with the situation. Several stray dogs have already been trapped and removed, but to ascertain the number of dogs in the area, it was decided to carry out a Rabies campaign as this





would serve as a dual purpose exercise.

Thanks to a donation of Rabies Vaccine from Wild Horizon Wildlife Trust and with the assistance of the Victoria Falls Municipality, the Department of Veterinary Services and VFAW, a two day campaign took place last week. Teams operated from Lupinyu Growth Point, Chinotimba and Mkhosana High-density areas. A total of 321 dogs and 9 cats were vaccinated, many dogs were treated for flystrike on their ears and several minor wounds were attended to. Two more serious injuries were referred to Dr. Zishiri and Dr. Moyo (the Vic Falls Veterinary Surgery). Hand outs of dog biscuits, blankets and fly smear were given as well as education pamphlets. The team from Wild Horizons Wildlife Trust took 87 blood samples for disease analysis. Door-to-door vaccinations were also carried out in an attempt to cover as many dogs as possible. VAWZ members undertook a survey in the low density areas to determine the number of dogs and how many of them had been vaccinated against Rabies.

Data analysis will reveal vital statistics on which we can plan our future operations. It is pleasing to note that after discussions with VAWZ, the Municipality have updated their Dog Licensing and Control By-laws, however implementation and enforcement will be a challenge. The Hotel Industry was also engaged concerning the ever increasing feral cat population and plans are in place to help manage these animals. VAWZ would like to thank the Wild Horizons Wildlife Trust – Roger and Jessica Parry, Dr. Chris Foggin; Victoria Falls Municipality - Mr. Mhlanga, Mr. Zondo, Mr. Nyamande; Department of Veterinary Services – Dr. Njagu, Dr. Zishiri, Sebastian Ncube, Brown Msipa, Crispin Majengwa, VFAW – Tonya Meikle; ZRP – Chief Inspector Gotori; The Rest Camp - Jim Brown and Martin Vaughn and Ram Petroleum for their assistance in this campaign. Their contributions along with the generosity and support of the public enable VAWZ to continue making a difference to Animal Welfare standards throughout Zimbabwe.

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### **Elections in June, proposes Robert Mugabe**

There are interesting times ahead as Robert Mugabe has proposed 29<sup>th</sup> June as the date for the elections. But not everyone is in agreement, some wanting them in March and others don't want them until next year. It does, however, seem likely that there will be elections this year and June seems the most probable.

So what does this bode for the people of Zimbabwe? In an article by Dewa Mavhunga in the UK Guardian: *For millions of Zimbabweans, the new year is less a symbol of hope than of dread. Elections are supposed to take place in 2013, and judging from past experience, they augur nothing more than violence, torture and death, accompanied by economic meltdown and political chaos. ...*

*During a visit to Zimbabwe in November, I got a vivid sense of impending doom. People told me of their feeling of déjà vu: another cycle of electoral violence was approaching, but little had changed on the ground. Instead of focusing on pulling themselves out of poverty and on rebuilding lives shattered by the 2008 wave of political repression, they were bracing themselves for further chaos.*

*This is not paranoia. The 2008 general elections were riddled with extreme violence by the security forces and supporters of Zanu-PF. Security forces and supporters killed over 200 people and beat, tortured and displaced thousands more ...*

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### **Minister of Tourism in a Minefield**

Meanwhile the Minister of Tourism, Walter Mzembe, is mired in his own problems at a mine in his constituency, Masvingo, belonging to RioZim. The workers at the mine had gone on strike over pay and conditions when Walter Mzembe stepped in to 'help'.

However Walter Mzembe's help was not appreciated by the owners of the mine, RioZim, which stated: *Minister Mzembe arrived at the mine... He called a public meeting and announced that RioZim had not complied with the indigenisation obligations of the country and hence they were taking over Renco.*

Walter Mzembe has since threatened to file for defamation against RioZim.

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Robert Mugabe's birthday parties have become renowned in Zimbabwe for their extravagance. This year's is set to be another spectacle in Bindura with reports that US\$600,000 will be raised for the event, which will 'come from the Provinces' states a Herald newspaper article. Robert Mugabe will be 89 years old.

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### *And then there is the case of the selling of elephants to a zoo in China. Here is a report from Mercury News:* **Zimbabwe selling elephants cheap to China**

By Erin Conway-Smith, GlobalPost

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Over and over again, the baby elephant scrapes its skin against the metal bars of a zoo in northern China, appearing agitated and distressed.

Not long ago this elephant lived with its family herd in the wilds of Hwange National Park, the largest reserve in Zimbabwe. Then it was caught, and along with three other young elephants, flown halfway around the world.

At Taiyuan Zoo, where Chinese animal lovers filmed the plight of the little lone elephant behind bars, another that came from Zimbabwe died soon after its long and difficult journey. The elephants arrived in late November, during a winter of record cold temperatures.

Now animal rights groups in Zimbabwe are fighting to stop more of their country's baby elephants from being taken from the wild and sold to zoos in China, which pay handsomely for these animals from Zimbabwe's cash-strapped national parks.

China and Zimbabwe have close political and economic ties, with trade between them reaching more than \$800 million last year. There is no shortage of elephants in southern Africa and there is demand in China, but animal rights groups argue it's inhumane to take young animals from the wild and send them on difficult journeys to overseas zoos where they are kept — often in dire conditions.

Dave Neale, director of animal welfare for the Animals Asia Foundation, said that trade in wild elephants caught and sold by Zimbabwe to China is legal under CITES, the international authority that regulates trade in wildlife. But it is "far from ethical," he said.

Elephant calves form close bonds with their mothers and other female relatives, Neale explained, and removing a young elephant from its herd in the wild to captivity is devastating. Many of the calves die, he added.

"From a moral standpoint, removing a highly intelligent, social animal from its family group and wild habitat to be shipped to another country and placed inside a concrete cell cannot be justified," Neale said. "This trade in wild-caught elephants is morally repugnant and should stop immediately."

After news of the young African elephant's death at Taiyuan Zoo, five other 3- and 4-year-old elephants slated to be sent to China were returned to the wild following weeks of pressure from the Zimbabwe National SPCA. While animal lovers cheered this success, by that point it was impossible for the young elephants' family herds to be located.

And while that shipment was stopped, animal rights groups say there are reports of four more baby elephants soon to be exported to China.

Johnny Rodrigues, chairman of the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, has been working to draw attention to the situation, and fears this won't be the end.

He said that Chinese zoos have paid for a total of eight elephants, and when public attention lessens, the rest of the order will be shipped.

"When everybody cools down, these animals are going to go," Rodrigues said.

He said that Zimbabwe's national parks badly need the money — they have been unable to pay the wages of employees the past few months.

Caroline Washaya-Moyo, spokeswoman for the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, the government agency that runs the country's national parks, couldn't be reached by phone despite repeated attempts, and didn't respond to emails requesting an interview.

Ed Lanca, chairman of the Zimbabwe National SPCA, said this moneymaking venture by Zimbabwe's national parks "is basically kidnapping."

"It's unacceptable that a baby elephant is taken from its mother and sent to a foreign country with substandard conditions," he said.

Lanca said the Zimbabwe National SPCA, which is barely surviving on limited private donor funding, has too few resources to help monitor the exports of elephants. His organization only has two animal welfare inspectors for the entire country, and their last truck capable of making out-of-town trips recently broke down.

"If another export happens, we can't assist because I don't have the means to intervene," he said. "It's dire."

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## SOUTH AFRICA

### Rhino Stats

Johannesburg - A total of 82 rhino have been poached in the country since January 1, the water and environmental affairs department said on Wednesday.

"The Kruger National Park remains the hardest hit by rhino poachers this year, having lost 61 rhinos to mostly foreign poachers," it said in a statement.

"Twenty one poachers have been arrested, 14 of them in the Kruger National Park."

Eight rhino had been poached in KwaZulu-Natal, six in North West, four in Mpumalanga and three in Limpopo

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### Syndicates target loopholes in SA hunting permits

The Mercury

Durban - Criminal syndicates have been roping in bogus sport-hunters from the Czech Republic, Poland and Russia to step around South Africa's ban on Vietnamese "pseudo-hunters" shooting rhinos and smuggling their horns to the East.

Last year, in an attempt to plug a legal loophole exploited by Vietnamese organised crime syndicates, Environment Minister Edna Molewa announced that the government would refuse to issue any more rhino-hunting permits to Vietnamese citizens.

The move came after widespread abuse of hunting permits to circumvent the rhino horn trading ban under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).

Since 2003 Vietnamese citizens have hunted more than 400 rhinos legally in South Africa, sparking a major outcry from several conservation groups.

This has pressured the government to stop a situation whereby people with no prior hunting experience were being recruited by organised crime groups to obtain rhino horn for the black market under the pretext of legitimate sport-hunting permits.

Now it has emerged that the crime syndicates changed their strategy rapidly, even before the ban on Vietnamese hunters took effect in South Africa in April last year.

A new report to be presented to the Cites meeting in Bangkok on March 3 has suggested that Vietnamese middle-men hired sport hunters from Poland and the Czech Republic to visit South Africa as "proxy pseudo-hunters".



An intelligence report from the Czech Environmental Inspectorate to the Cites rhino working group in September last year warned that several Czech hunters (mainly from one area in northern Bohemia) were being recruited by Vietnamese agents living in the Czech Republic.

“These recruited ‘hunters’ are not members of any Czech hunting associations, do not have hunting licences and have no previous hunting experience. They allegedly travel to South Africa to hunt a rhinoceros at a selected location, identified by the recruiter,” reads the report. Expedition expenses had been covered by the recruiters, who also made Czechs sign a declaration to give up the rhino trophy when they returned home.

“Once the trophy reaches the Czech Republic it is laundered into the illegal trade,” says the report, which notes that Czech and South African authorities were co-operating to deal with the new trend. According to a summary report co-authored by Richard Emslie, the Pietermaritzburg-based scientific officer of the African Rhino Specialist Group, rhino horn smuggling remained “one of the most structured criminal activities currently faced by Cites”.

There was also evidence that Polish and Russian proxy hunters were being recruited for the same purpose, while syndicates were scrambling to fill the growing demand for rhino horn by raiding museums, antique dealers, auction houses, taxidermists and private collections worldwide.

Since 2009 at least 94 rhino horns had been stolen in Argentina, Europe and the US.

Europol had reported at least 67 rhino horn thefts and 15 attempted thefts in Europe since 2011, although the spate of museum thefts appeared to have dropped significantly since the UK and some European nations introduced tighter controls last year to prevent rhino horns being laundered into the black market.

Although the South African Department of Environmental Affairs had been alerted to the bogus hunts by Poles and Czechs, the Cites report said there was still a need for vigilance to ensure that only bona fide hunters were granted permits.

Ironically, there were indications that the clampdown on Vietnamese and other bogus hunters and tougher domestic clamps in South Africa may be driving the unrelenting rhino-poaching spree.

According to Emslie’s report, the clampdown on bogus hunts and the plugging of other loopholes “appears to have significantly constricted the illicit rhino horn supply from pseudo-hunting; and this might have resulted in shifts to other sources of horn such as poaching (the largest source of illegal horn), illegal dehorning, or thefts”.

However, Emslie said other factors could be also at play, including increasing corruption or the emergence of new rhino horn markets.

Mozambique was also emerging as a major link in the chain in the horn smuggling routes to the Far East, with evidence that, increasingly, horns were being shifted out via Maputo International Airport and other sea or airports in Mozambique.

Horns were then sent to Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Mauritius and to Vietnam and China.

There was also evidence that local professional hunters were involved in the scams, particularly after the country imposed tighter regulations on the number of rhinos which could be shot by a single hunter.

“In some cases, professional hunters in South Africa, rather than the ‘hunter’ listed on the permit, illegally shot the rhino, which is a violation of the country’s hunting laws.”

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**U.S Pledge to Help Curb Poaching Most Welcome**

From All Africa.com

THE pledge by the United States to provide technical support to Tanzania in the effort to eliminate game poaching is good news indeed. Despite incessant efforts to curb poaching, it still seems an uphill task, with the criminals in it very much on the vice.

Natural Resources and Tourism Minister Khamis Kagasheki and the Deputy Secretary, US Department of the Interior, Mr David Hayes, signed a memorandum of understanding early this week that aims at curbing poaching in Tanzania.

According to statistics, poachers kill an average of 30 elephants a day. This is incredible; this is chilling, to say the least. In fact, poachers have over the years been roaming in our national parks almost at will killing wild animals and stealing government trophies. Sometimes they cart away live animals.

The government has, from time to time, attempted to flush them out. But poachers remain a step or two ahead of state operatives. Fortunately, the criminals are not always the winners. Last year, government trophies worth 212.9m/- were impounded in a special operation to fight poaching in Liwale District.

The seizure was made by a Special Joint Task Force formed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. The operation seized 80 firearms, 685 rounds of ammunition and 298 shell castings. This was a laudable effort but a lot more needs to be done.

The team attributed the success to support from members of the public. A total of 101 suspects were apprehended and arraigned in courts of law. The types of firearms seized included one SAR, 16 rifles, and 63 shotguns.

A huge arsenal, indeed! The crack team employed scientific intelligence gathering techniques that resulted in the capture of the 101 culprits. It is hats off to the team. The operation in Liwale will be the leading example for similar exercises to be conducted countrywide.

This is the way to go. Poachers can only be controlled through better coordination, incisive use of better equipment and other stringent measures. Such measures include enlisting the services of Tanzania Wildlife Service (TWS).

We understand that the government is also in the process of reviewing the 2005 Wildlife Conservation Act, a move that will include introduction of provisions that will call for stiffer penalties, longer prison terms and higher fines for anyone involved in poaching. The sooner this is achieved the better.

**WOLFGANG'S COLUMN****SINGAPORE CUSTOMS OFFICIALS SEIZE 1.8 TONS OF BLOOD IVORY**

Blood ivory worth over 2.5 million US Dollars was confiscated yesterday in Singapore, when a container load from a yet to be named African country, supposedly comprising waste paper, was found to be actually elephant tusks and ivory pieces. Nearly 1.100 cut pieces of tusks were reportedly seized which had been concealed in the container, wrapped into sacks and hidden under other cargo. Officials according to one source were getting suspicious when the weights did not add up and then decided to open the container, making the find and effecting legal seizure while other information talks of a tip off leading to the discovery.

Information at hand also speaks of local authorities pursuing officials of the shipping and forwarding company as well as being in touch with authorities in the country of origin to arrest, if possible, the owners of the blood cargo.

The report also omitted naming the final destination of the contraband shipment, but is suspected to be the mainland of China, which has become globally notorious for not doing anywhere near enough to curb illegal imports and crack down on carving shops where the blood ivory is turned into intricate figures and art pieces.

The CITES conference in a few weeks in Bangkok is expected to be one of the most hotly debated meetings over the massive scale of poaching in Africa, of elephant and rhinos, to feed the greed among the nouvelle riche in China to possess carved ivory, or in the case of rhino horns afford the outrageous prized for pulverized horn, which medicinal value is actual nil. It is generally expected that demands will be voiced to withdraw China's ivory trading status as one measure to reduce all shipments of ivory. That however is well understood will not curb smuggling, as was the case just now. Inadequate wildlife laws in Africa too are often named as a contributory factor, as fines are generally ridiculously low and prison terms often measured in weeks and best months. Watch this space for upcoming reports from the CITES conference and what transpires to crack down on poaching and the illicit trade of ivory and rhino horn.

### **INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE PASSES OUT 184 TOURISM POLICE OFFICERS**

Uganda's Inspector General of Police, Lt. General Kale Kayihura, last Friday passed out 184 specially trained police officers as staff of Uganda's Tourism Police. Drawn from across the ranks of the Uganda Police Force, the officers had both applied and were selected for their skills and experience on the force and underwent an intensive 1 month course at the national police school in Kabalye / Masindi. Course content included tourism laws, regulations and policy, customer care and guest relations, understanding hospitality but also specially targeted techniques like security procedures and concepts, hostage rescue procedures, operational planning and weapons training. Staff from the Uganda Tourist Board and the Uganda Wildlife Authority were among those who delivered lectures and interacted with the officers during their month long training to instill a greater understanding to them how the sector works and interacts with the country's economy and society at large. Lt. General Kayihura on the occasion of graduating the course participants said: 'It is important to develop [a] Tourism Police to counter the threat of terrorists who might target them (tourists) when they are here'. The Uganda Government had created the tourism police concept three years ago but to the disappointment of the tourism industry and key stakeholders it took still until now before tangible results could be seen. The officers will be deployed immediately to key tourism attractions, places of interest regularly visited by tourists but also to key hotels in the city of Kampala in order to boost existing surveillance and monitoring capacity. The national police chief also announced on the occasion that a new dedicated anti terrorism training school will be set up in the district of Kanungu, which borders the key Bwindi Gorilla National Park and extends to the border with the Congo DR, where land has been secured for that purpose. Tourism stakeholders were swift to extend praise to the government for providing specialist training for these 184 police officers while expressing hope that more such courses would now be conducted in order to boost numbers and allow deployment across the entire country to all areas and sites of importance to the tourism industry.

### **ANTIPOACHING OPERATION IN SERENGETI SEES 4 POACHERS KILLED IN FIRE FIGHT**

News were confirmed over the weekend that 4 poachers, caught red handed trying to hack the tusks out of a recently killed elephant, met their fate when they foolishly decided to engage in a fire fight with anti poaching patrols and rangers in the Serengeti National Park.

While every loss of human life is regrettable, the news were nevertheless greeted with enthusiasm among the country's conservation fraternity, seeing that SENAPA staff were making good of government promises to combat poaching, a menace which is threatening the country's big tourism business. Said a regular



source from Arusha yesterday when calling in the news: *'Our poaching situation is dire. The entire Serengeti only has about 200 rangers and yet it is almost 15.000 square kilometers large. We need to invest more in anti poaching and maybe, like you wrote last week, also use those drones which they have started to bring to Kenya. That could provide the surveillance and then the rangers can be airlifted to any suspicious movements seen. Commercial poaching is the greatest threat to our tourism industry now. The news of elephant killings are putting potential clients off. We need to work hand in hand with our partners from abroad to help finance anti poaching. But other issues like the Lake Natron project are not helping us here. We need to go back to the single commitment our founding father made to the nation and the world, to promote conservation at all cost. Now those poachers were firing first on the approaching rangers and paid with their life for it. Let it be a lesson to others, their days are numbered'*.

The anti poaching unit recovered a machine gun and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, traditional weapons like spears and bows / arrows as well as slings and traps from the camp of the poachers. No identification has been possible until now and security organs are said to be searching villages neighbouring the park for anyone reported missing over the past few days, also with the aim to find any potential accomplices still at large.

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Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly. But when they lit a fire in the craft, it sank, proving once and for all that you can't have your kayak and heat it.

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Have a good week

Gill

## KUBU CAFE

For the month of February, we will be closed on Sundays, but resume Sundays over public holidays/ long weekends, and busy tourism times.

2nd Cup coffee half price.

Look out for our specials such as stuffed chicken breast wrapped and grilled in bacon, with green salad.

Additional toasted sandwiches now on menu: Chicken mayonnaise, and Tuna Mayonnaise.

We are an I-spot (I-connect wireless connectivity) (one can buy a voucher at a very reasonable price), and we sell cellphone/talk time.

