

Bojnice zoo burned rhinoceros horns to stress poaching

BY THE end of September, rhinoceros horns were symbolically burned at the Bojnice zoo in order to draw attention to the worldwide problem of poaching and trade in rhinoceros horn. By burning six horns, the Bratislava Customs Office and the Environment Ministry have joined other countries around the world, thus commemorating World Rhinoceros Day (on Monday, September 22).



Rhino horns were burnt in Bojnice zoo. (Source: SITA)

“A total of eight rhinoceros horns were secured by the Bratislava Customs Office two years ago, when Czech tourists attempted to smuggle them through the Slovak Republic,” Customs Office spokesperson Katarína Tehlárová told the TASR newswire. “Seeing as the species is protected and is in danger of extinction, it is forbidden to trade with the product, which was therefore seized.”

Tehlárová added that the value of one kilogram of rhinoceros horn can amount to up \$60,000 on the black market, with the eight horns that were seized valued at €1.35 million.

“In many eastern countries, people believe that the powder from rhinoceros horn boosts male sexual potency or represents a cure for cancer and acne,” she explained.

“However, no scientific research has confirmed any effect of the rhinoceros horns on human health.”

“The world-wide project involves several countries, for example Kenya, the UK, France, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland ...” spokesperson of the Trenčín (Bojnice lies in the Trenčín region) Customs Office Renáta Peťovská said. “The Slovak Customs Administration has joined this operation actively and supports the idea. She specified that eight rhino horns were burnt – those which were flown in to Bratislava, probably meant for Czech importers as hunting trophies. They were seized by the Customs office and made the property of the state. The symbolic burning of horns was accompanied by demonstrations of the work of customs officers from Bratislava and Trenčín; as September 21 is the National Day of Customs Officers.

Children were encouraged to draw a picture or make a model of a horn, as those who did so were admitted without tickets. The drawings were also burnt, and the children thus symbolically supported the protection of this endangered species.

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