

Electronic SA visa applications to curb fake permits

Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba says the department will this year introduce an electronic visa application system in order to curb fraudulent permits from foreign nationals.



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The Minister said this when Ministers in the Peace and Security Cluster fielded oral questions at the National Council of Provinces on Tuesday.

He was responding to Democratic Alliance (DA) Eastern Cape Member of Parliament Leon Magwebu, who had asked what the department was doing to address the weaknesses that lead to foreign nationals being in the country on fraudulent permits.

“During the course of the year, we are going to introduce a number of initiatives. One of them is the electronic applications for visas and for a number of other permits to the country.

“That will enable the applicant to obtain information electronically and submit their applications and the documentation to support their applications electronically,” he said.

The Minister said the initiative would remove the need for the department to provide frontline services that tend to stretch government's capacity. He said the initiative would also pave way for a centralised adjudication system to enable the department to take decisions quickly in terms of people's applications.

"But we further intend to introduce an amendment to the legislation which is going to enable the department to have an independent citizenship advisory board.

"But this is only for those who are applying for citizenship once all other processes have been followed in terms of the latter of the law. So all of these initiatives are going to be introduced during the course of the year," he said.

Initiatives underway to enhance border law enforcement

Meanwhile, Minister Gigaba said several initiatives were being implemented to address border line enforcement and to deal with the number of undocumented foreign nationals.

He said that the current model of cooperative border management contributes to a lack of effective and efficient border management.

In future, the Minister said that the border management authority that will be established will improve border law enforcement based on a model of integrated border management and the establishment of a single line of command and the control structure in the border environment.

Corruption at ports of entry - which leads to the facilitation of some undocumented foreign nationals entering the country – was also a challenge. The department is dealing with corrupt officials on an on-going basis, the Minister said.

To address the key challenges facing border management and border law enforcement as reflected above, there has been measures put in place, this includes:

- A multi-party agreement on enhanced border management signed by 17 organs of state to strengthen border management and cooperation as a transition period towards the establishment of the Border Management Authority;
- An integrated border management strategy approved by the JCPS structure aimed at better coordinating and implementing high-level border management interventions across government in incremental manner;
- A border infrastructure capital and maintenance programme and a registered public-private sector project in the developing key six land ports of entry to address the lack of integrated systems supporting migration management;
- The establishment of a community crossing point at Tshidilamolomo – the pilot project between South Africa and Botswana - to enable the legal movement of local community members;
- In the transition period towards the establishment of the Border Management Authority, the department continues to work closely with all border management stakeholders on various matters such as the maintenance of border fences, increased security patrols at our border line, joint operations – especially over the festive periods – and strengthened bilateral agreements on border management and migration matters to enhance border cooperation.