

No unabridged certificate for visa exempt countries

CAPE TOWN: Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa says minors travelling from visa-exempt countries will no longer need to produce an unabridged birth certificate and parental consent at South Africa's ports of entry. However, they will be required to provide documentation proving the relationship between them and the parent or guardian that they will be travelling with when entering South Africa. The Deputy President said this when he fielded oral questions at the National Assembly on Thursday.



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He said this was in line with the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to look into the unintended consequences that the 2014 Immigration Regulations may have had on tourism. "Minors from visa-exempt countries will no longer be required to present an unabridged birth certificate and parental consent affidavit upon boarding their flight to South Africa. ?? "They will instead be strongly advised to travel with a proof of relationship and consent from absent parents or guardians should they be asked to produce them at random. ??

"This is in line with practices in other countries. "Should someone be required to prove their parental relationship or consent to travel with minors, they will be asked to produce the relevant documents upon arrival at ports of entry," he said. The decision was part of recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which were adopted by Cabinet on 21 October 2015.

Encouraging tourism, combatting child trafficking

The Immigration Regulations of 2014 were first introduced to protect the country's security, particularly to ensure that children entering or leaving South Africa do not fall victim to child trafficking.

The Deputy President said, however, that with regards to minors travelling from countries that require a South African visa will still need to provide these documents as part of the visa application process. "This is in line with the practice in many other countries. ? ?

"The measures adopted by Cabinet follow extensive deliberation, research and international benchmarking. ? ?"These measures ease the visa application process and remove onerous requirements for visitors travelling with children without compromising the country's security or undermining our efforts to combat child trafficking," he said.

Deputy President Ramaphosa said the new measures will address negative perceptions about the ease of travel to South Africa and help to ensure that South Africa becomes a destination of choice for both tourists and business people. ?"Our efforts to protect children remain robust and undiminished," he said.

The Deputy President said, meanwhile, that South African children leaving the country will still be required to produce an unabridged certificate, as per the requirement of the Immigration Regulations. He said the new measures will be implemented in a phased manner over the course of the next few months, a process that will be overseen by the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

Home Affairs eases visa application requirements?

The Deputy President said, meanwhile, that government has eased the regulations which required that visitors apply for visas in person at the relevant South African mission or visa facilitation centre. He said to address this challenge, which affected countries where no South African missions existed, postal applications will now be accepted.

"Thereafter, the biometric details and photos of those travellers will be captured on arrival at ports of entry. ? "Over the course of the next three months, the capturing of biometrics at ports of entry will be implemented," he said. ? The Deputy President said selected companies in certain countries will be accredited to facilitate visa application processes. ? He said going forward, government would prioritise the establishment of additional visa application centres in key countries.

"Tourism is an important sector in our economy, with great potential for growth and job creation. "We will continue to work with all stakeholders in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect to ensure that South Africa becomes one of the world's leading tourism destinations."

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