

South Africa to update ID system – here’s what you should know

– Business Tech 20 Nov 2020

President Cyril Ramaphosa’s cabinet has approved the Official Identity Management Policy for public comment.

In a media briefing on Thursday (19 November), minister in the Presidency Jackson Mthembu said that the policy proposes a number of changes to existing legislation including the Identification Act and Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, to align them with the Constitution and the Protection of Personal Information Act.

“It also proposes the integration of the national population register to enable a single view of a person with features to interface with other government and private sector identity management systems,” Mthembu said.

“It will integrate the current systems into a biometric-enabled National Identity System. The new proposed population register will form the basis of an official e-identity which will serve as the backbone of state and private digital platforms.”

In June 2019, International Relations and Cooperation minister Naledi Pandor said that the government is working on a new ID system that will provide a single source of information about all clients, using both biographic and biometric technologies.

“The new national identity system South Africa seeks to build will serve as a master source for civics and immigration management,” she said.

“The modernisation of South Africa’s Home Affairs, when fully and successfully implemented, will re-engineer and automate most of the key processes of the department and yield a significantly enhanced national identification system, and a credible national population register.”

Pandor said that some of the key elements of the system include:

- Records of persons throughout their lifespan;
- Birth, marriage and death records of residents (citizens, permanent residents, asylum seekers and refugees);
- All persons entering the country will have their biometrics captured during the visa application process or at the point of entry;
- Processing and storing of asylum seekers and refugees’ applications;
- Records of visitors who enter and leave the country;
- Records of illegal persons in the country.

