

Special SA "event visa" to be launched in Egypt

JOHANNESBURG: The special "event visa" which will help process soccer fans faster at the country's airports, is to be launched on 27 April 2009, on national Freedom Day in South Africa.

By Nthambeleni Gabara ^{3 Apr 2009}

"We are proud to announce that the world's first event visa will be launched in Egypt ahead of the FIFA Confederations Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup," said Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula on Thursday, 2 April 2009.

Egypt is the only other African country which will be participating in the Confederations Cup to be held in South Africa in June.

The event visa allows soccer fans coming to South Africa for the FIFA Confederations Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup to use dedicated counters at airports and give them pre-clearance before they arrive.

Foreign nationals will be able to go through a pre-screening and pre-clearance process at selected ports of entry with a free event visa.

This will take place both regionally and abroad, meaning tourists can receive the pre-clearance in their own country before they even arrive in South Africa.

South African immigration officials will be stationed at several of the busiest airports around the world, including Heathrow, Dubai, India and Hong Kong. They will be customer service-trained volunteers and able to speak various foreign languages.

Those passengers who have received pre-clearance by South African immigration officials will be able to arrive in South Africa and go straight through to baggage collection and then customs.

This will enhance the department's ability to facilitate the entry and exit process through the country's borders, resulting in a less-frustrating journey which will lead to a positive impression of the country as a whole.

Complaints in the past regarding immigration processes in South Africa have focused around the lack of speed and professionalism from officials.

"As the department, we will be monitoring to ensure that no criminal activities are taking place when the soccer spectators arrive in South Africa, we will ask to see their air ticket and match tickets.

"We will continue to use the event visa in all big sport events that will be held in the country in the future," the minister said.

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