

SA awash with tourists for World Cup - Deputy Minister

Home Affairs Deputy Minister Malusi Gigaba announced yesterday that 24 percent more people had entered the country this June compared to the same period last year. According to the department's figures, just over 940 000 foreigners had entered the country between June 1 and June 29, up from about 760 000 last year. When South African citizens entering the country were included, more 1.2 million people had entered the country for the World Cup. Gigaba could not say whether more people had been expected, but said the department was prepared for any number that might enter the country at any given time. "We cannot say whether we were expecting more, but as a department we were not expecting any fewer than the numbers that came in. "We did not have a specific number that we were expecting, but we increased our capacity so that people would not struggle when they entered the country," he said. Of the top 15 nationalities visiting the country, including those from the US, UK, Brazil and Malawi, Lesotho citizens topped the list. "Maybe it is because of Lesotho's close proximity, but they do top the list for the highest number of visitors. The US has also overtaken the UK, with more visitors during this World Cup. Gigaba said about 220 people were refused entry to the country for various reasons, including being in possession of fraudulent permits, visas and stamps, giving contradictory reasons for visiting the country or having been placed on South Africa's Visa and Entry Stop List. "We will remain vigilant in terms of the hooligans or anybody trying to enter the country when they are not supposed to. "Through our Airline Liaison Officers, we refused entry to ' people and we will continue in the same manner to keep those kind of people out of the country," he said. According to Gigaba, the department was aware that there would be some visitors who would overstay their welcome, but said the Immigration Act was clear on the punishment for such people. "Where immigration laws have been violated, of course we will take proper action, but it would be a huge task to trace each and every person that has overstayed. "There is a unit within Home Affairs that traces these people, but we will always have people who overstay; it is a problem we have had for many years," said Gigaba. Before the World Cup began, the department had voiced concern about the threat of human trafficking escalating during the event, but Gigaba said they had not received any significant reports. "I know there is a possible case of human smuggling in Cape Town which police are on top of, but generally we have not received any reports about arrests or anything like that. "The Social Development Department deals directly with human trafficking victims and they have not reported anything to that effect," said the Deputy Minister.

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