

Home Affairs to crack down on fraudulent Identity Documents

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Pretoria - The Department of Home Affairs is working on rolling out an online Identity Document (ID) verification system which is expected to crack down fraudulent documentation.

The project will allow the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa), banks, insurance and retail sector, among others real time access to the Home Affairs National Identification System (HANIS), for the verification of the identity of prospective and current clients.

HANIS stores South African citizens' ID numbers, fingerprints and photos.

Accessing HANIS will equip these sectors with the ability to conduct on-the-spot verification of the finger prints of a client against the information stored in HANIS.

"This will make it difficult for people who have fraudulent IDs to use them," Home Affairs Director-General Mkuseli Apleni told a media briefing on Tuesday.

According to Apleni the system will be up and running by the end of this year.

The department has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the South African Banking Risk Information Centre (SABRIC) in March, in this regard.

This comes in light of the escalating ID fraud. On Monday, police arrested three men in connection to 588 fraudulent IDs found hidden in a roof of a house in Eldorado Extension 9.

The police were looking for a man in connection for attempted murder however, when they searched his home they found the fraudulent IDs hidden in his roof. The man and two others were arrested.

Gauteng Police's Brigadier Govindsamy Mariemuthoo said their rapid response unit also found two car radios and suspected stolen car parts hidden in the suspect's bedroom. Police also confiscated 1.5 kilograms of dagga.

"When they searched the house they found the ID books wrapped in plastic in the ceiling. The suspect told us that he bought them from an official at the Department of Home Affairs in Roodepoort. The suspect said he was planning to sell them," explained Mariemuthoo.

Police suspected that the man was selling false ID books to people who crossed the South African border illegally.

Mariemuthoo said their forensic team would check his cell phone calls to see if he had communicated with any Home Affairs officials.

Welcoming the arrest, Apleni warned officials who were teaming up with criminals that they would face the full might of the law.

The department will also conduct its own investigation to find out how the IDs fell into the hands of the suspects.

He said the arrests showed that corruption could be uprooted by the department and police working together.

"The arrests once more underline our conviction that working together with our law enforcement agencies, we can make serious inroads in our fight against crime and corruption," Apleni said.

The suspects, who are South African citizens, will appear at the Protea magistrate court in Soweto on Wednesday. - BuaNews