

REFORMS

A new digital ID is coming to the country – here’s how it works

WENDY DONDOLO

SOUTH Africa has unveiled its first working digital ID as Home Affairs moves to shut down identity theft, document fraud and manipulation of government systems through a sweeping shift towards biometric verification and automated services.

Home Affairs Minister Leon Schreiber demonstrated the working prototype on Thursday as part of the department’s “Quantum Leap” reform programme, saying the smart-phone-based identity system would allow South Africans to securely prove who they are without relying solely on physical documents.

“The digital ID will be linked directly to the population register and secured through biometric verification, with users able to control what personal information they share and see when their data has been accessed.

“It is a revolution that Home Affairs is delivering and you are the very first people ever to see digital ID in action,” Schreiber said after demonstrating the system.

The system is intended to replace the fraud vulnerabilities associated with paper-based identification while allowing citizens to carry verified Home Affairs credentials on their smart-phones.

Schreiber said digital ID would not simply be a photograph or electronic copy of an ID card.

“Digital ID cannot and will not be a photograph of your ID card on your phone. That’s not what it is. Digital ID is a remote verification tool,” he said.

“It is a secure tool linked to your biometrics that enables you to confirm who you are without anyone having the ability to interfere with that.”

The prototype demonstrated on Thursday was linked to Schreiber’s actual information on the population register.

During the demonstration, an immigration official requested information from Schreiber’s digital ID using a QR code. Schreiber was able to choose which information to disclose, approve the request and, during a second demonstration, deny access altogether.

The department says the system will also create an audit trail allowing citizens to see when their information is accessed.

“Surveillance is the state watching

the citizen. What we are building is the opposite, the citizen watching the state and other users of their data,” Schreiber said.

The digital ID rollout forms part of a broader move to eliminate vulnerable paper-based identification.

Schreiber announced that Home Affairs will stop producing green ID books on March 31, 2027, before the document loses its status as a valid form of identification on March 31, 2028.

He said independent research had identified the green ID book as one of the most defrauded documents on the African continent, with its paper format and manually attached photograph making it vulnerable to manipulation.

“Because it is paperbased and contains a manual photograph that can easily be manipulated, this document sits at the core of the scourge of identity theft in our country,” Schreiber said.

“What many people may not realize is that it is also a critical pull factor for illegal immigrants seeking to obtain fraudulent papers.”

About 14.7 million South African citizens and permanent residents still rely solely on green ID books, down from 16 million six months ago, according to the minister.

Once production ends in March 2027, holders will have another 12 months to switch to smart ID cards before green books cease to be recognised as valid identification.

The department does not intend to abolish physical identification altogether.

Schreiber said use of the digital ID would be voluntary and the physical smart ID card would remain available.

“Effectively, we are moving from a situation where we currently have two versions of valid ID in the form of the insecure green ID book and the smart ID card to two new versions in the form of the secure smart ID card and smartphone-based digital ID,” he said. The department is processing public submissions on draft digital ID regulations, with Schreiber saying the final rules would place limits on how personal information could be used.

The digital wallet is also expected eventually to hold other Home Affairs credentials, including birth and marriage certificates.

The department is extending the same anti-fraud strategy to immigration and passports.

Its Electronic Travel Authorisation system uses biometrics, document verification and machine learning to process visa applications, with additional categories, including work and study visas, expected to be added in early 2027.

Schreiber said automation was intended to remove opportunities for officials or intermediaries to manipulate processes.

The department is also working towards a biometrically secured e-passport containing a chip with a traveller’s biometric information.

Once implemented, the passport could be read by electronic airport gates, while automated border gates are also planned as the Electronic Travel Authorisation system expands.

Schreiber summed up the department’s anti-corruption argument for automation in stark terms: “You cannot bribe a computer.”

Home Affairs said its internal crackdown had resulted in 144 dismissals, 73 arrests and 10 convictions across the department and Border Management Authority since July 2024.

The department ultimately wants digital systems to replace processes historically dependent on paperwork and human intervention.

“The fraud prone green ID book is being replaced by a modern and secure digital identity system,” Schreiber said.

“Corruption is not only being fought, it is being replaced by automation.”



HOME Affairs is introducing digital IDs and biometric systems to combat identity fraud, corruption. | FILE



AI-POWERED scams are making fake SARS messages harder to spot as the tax deadline approaches. | AI Generated

FRAUD

AI-powered tax scams target consumers ahead of SARS deadline

MASABATA MKWANANZI

THE growing trust in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is giving cyber criminals another weapon as taxpayers rush to meet the filing deadline, with experts warning that convincing fake South African Revenue Service (SARS) messages, investment offers, and tax documents are becoming harder to distinguish from the real thing.

This comes as the October 23 deadline approaches, with scammers exploiting the urgency around refunds, assessments, and outstanding tax matters to push people into acting before they stop to verify a message.

Anna Collard, SVP Content Strategy & CISO advisor at KnowBe4 Africa, and Chris Norton, general manager for Sub-Saharan Africa at Kaspersky, warn that AI is making familiar fraud tactics more convincing. SARS has also warned taxpayers about scams and phishing attempts during the 2026 filing season.

Research by KPMG and the University of Melbourne found that 62% of South Africans surveyed were willing to trust AI, compared with a global average of 46%. KnowBe4 research also found that 86% of South African respondents agreed that deepfakes had become so realistic that it was harder to know what to trust.

Collard said scammers no longer needed to rely on obvious warning signs such as poor grammar, fake logos, or unnatural voices.

“So, people accept that the threat is real and hard to detect. They just don’t believe it applies to them.

“We rate the risk accurately but rate ourselves generously. We think bad things happen to other people. And generative AI has removed the bad grammar, the wrong logo and the

stiff voice, while leaving our confidence entirely intact,” she said.

For taxpayers, she said, a professional-looking message or one appearing to come from a familiar source cannot automatically be trusted.

“Trust should attach to the channel, not the content. A video of someone you recognise, a message in a familiar voice, a polished PDF, none of it is evidence of anything anymore,” she added.

Collard also warned against relying on AI chatbots for important financial decisions.

“AI tools are fluent, and we mistake fluency for expertise. Use these tools to understand concepts and formulate better questions. Don’t use them as your adviser.”

Norton said the approaching tax deadline was creating another opportunity for scammers. Kaspersky researchers identified phishing websites designed to imitate SARS eFiling, as well as malicious attachments carrying names such as “Tax Returns Of RXX,XXX.XXX” and “Final_Assessment_Notification-2026-0X-0X.pdf”.

He said fake emails often carry phrases such as “Refund due” and “SARS Letter of demand” to persuade recipients to open attachments or follow instructions.

“By this point in the tax season, people are used to receiving messages about returns, assessments, and refunds, so an email like this may not immediately look out of place. “That is what scammers rely on. The closer we get to the deadline, the easier it is to act quickly because you think you are dealing with something that needs your attention,” Norton said.

SARS has also warned that scammers are using AI to create professional-looking email templates and fake refund notifications.



INCREASE

October fuel price outlook worsens as petrol nears R30

JASON WOOSEY

NEXT week’s fuel price increases could be worse than originally anticipated, with strong under-recoveries for petrol and diesel worsening the outlook as each day passes.

The latest information from the Central Energy Fund indicates potential petrol price increases of between R3.21 for 95 Unleaded and R3.01 for 93 Unleaded. Diesel costs are projected to rise by between R2.75 for 500ppm and R3.15 for 50ppm.

These predicted hikes will see all fuel types breaking new price records, with 95 Unleaded petrol expected to reach around R29.26 at the coast and R30.13 in Gauteng, with 93 Unleaded rising to around R29.93. The wholesale price of 500ppm diesel looks set to reach about R30.98 for those at the beach and R31.86 for inland residents.

These projections are significantly higher than they were just two weeks back, when petrol was predicted to rise by around R2.40 and diesel by between R2.04 and R2.40.

These increases come in the wake of Significant price increases in September, when both grades of petrol rose by R1.34 a litre and diesel increased by between R2.94 and R3.15.

The Slate Levy, which compensates oil companies for fluctuations in the preceding month, could add further pressure to fuel prices in October - particularly given the volatility seen in markets during the preceding month.

Steep international oil prices have created significant under-recoveries for both petrol and diesel, with Brent crude having touched a four-month high of \$108 per barrel this month following escalating tensions in the Middle East, and more specifically, fresh attacks on Saudi Arabian infrastructure by Iranian-backed fighters.

Oil markets have been swinging sharply on every twist in the US-Iran standoff, with the Strait of Hormuz remaining the key pressure point. Brent crude initially jumped by more than \$4 a barrel on Monday after US President Donald Trump rejected an Iranian proposal that would have paved the way for a seven-day ceasefire and the reopening of the strategic waterway.

Prices later pared some of those gains as Qatar-mediated talks offered a glimmer of hope for a deal, but prices remained volatile this week, surging to around \$106-\$107 a barrel on Tuesday before dipping below the \$100 mark later in the week.

This as traders weigh signs of recovering Middle Eastern crude exports against continued uncertainty over the US-Iran conflict and stalled peace efforts. Saudi Arabia’s resumption of tanker loadings from Yanbu and the restoration of its East-West Pipeline have eased some supply concerns, while hopes of a diplomatic breakthrough have provided further pressure.



WITH rising tensions in the Middle East, South Africa’s fuel prices are poised for significant increases in October, as indicated by the latest data from the Central Energy Fund. | FILE

On Sale Now

This October issue of GLAMOUR is all about stepping into the new season with fresh energy and bold ideas. We celebrate the winners of GLAMOUR’s Most GLAMOURous Awards (#GMG2026) with exclusive interviews and stunning portraits, explore the evolution of the creator economy with cover stars Cleo, Lebo Lion, Lesego, Auctavia, Oratile and Pamela, and take you through the latest beauty trends, summer fashion, travel, cars and more.



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STUDENT DEBT

Unisa fundraising drive raises more than R10m

SIZWE DLAMINI

UNISA has raised more than R10 million towards its R50m student debt relief campaign, bringing renewed hope to hundreds of students facing financial barriers to completing their qualifications.

The funds were raised at the university’s second annual fundraising gala dinner, held at The Maslow Hotel in Menlyn under the theme, “Invest in the future of Unisa students”.

The event brought together business leaders, alumni, academics, university stakeholders and supporters of student funding initiatives, all contributing to a campaign aimed at helping

students whose outstanding fees are preventing them from progressing or graduating. More than 553 students are expected to benefit from this year’s fundraising drive.

The evening began with R4m in pledges, which was matched by the Unisa Board of Council, taking the amount to R8m. Additional pledges made during the evening pushed the total past the R10m mark.

Unisa Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Puleng LenkaBula said the initiative reflected the university’s responsibility to ensure that financial difficulties did not stand between students and the completion of their qualifications.

“It is crucial that we ensure students near completion are not left behind due to outstanding fees,” LenkaBula said.

She said students nearing graduation represented an important investment in South Africa’s future and should not have their potential limited by financial circumstances.

With nearly 400 000 students, Unisa plays a significant role in widening access to higher education, including the training of professionals such as teachers and chartered accountants.

The university’s fundraising campaign comes as student debt remains a major challenge across South Africa’s higher education sector.

The evening’s main speaker, Business Leadership South Africa CEO and Unisa alumna Busisiwe Mavuso, reflected on the role the university had played in her own career and in creating opportunities for

people who might otherwise struggle to access higher education.

Mavuso described Unisa as a “beacon of hope” for students who work while studying and said expanding access to education was closely linked to South Africa’s economic future.

She called for collective action to ensure students receive the support they need to complete their studies, saying tackling student debt requires more than financial contributions alone.

Unisa Convocation President Justice Dabampe also thanked donors, emphasising that collective support could help turn students’ academic ambitions into completed qualifications.

National Student Representative Council President Siyathokoza Nkwanyana highlighted the wider impact of student debt, saying financial barriers can affect students’ ability to register, continue their studies and graduate.

Drawing from his own experience, Nkwanyana said education could transform not only the lives of individual students but also those of their families and communities.

He urged alumni, businesses and civil society organisations to view contributions to student funding as an investment in the potential of young people.

Unisa Board of Council Deputy Chairperson Dan Mosia meanwhile sought to reassure potential donors about the university’s financial management, pointing to its record of consecutive clean audits.

The fundraising effort forms part of wider discussions about how to address student debt and ensure graduates are able to enter the workforce without being held back by accumulated education costs.



Notice of Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Kalk Bay St James SRA NPC (KBSJSRA) will be hosting an AGM. All stakeholders are invited to a review of the past financial year's activities and planning for 2027/28.

Date: 28 October 2026
Time: 18h00
Venue: Kalk Bay Community Centre, 27 Main Road Kalk Bay

Resolutions presented at the meeting can only be voted on by bona fide members of the KBSJSRA. This membership is available free of charge to all owners of property within the KBSJSRA footprint who are liable for the additional rate (additional rate payers), but they must be registered before 21 October 2026.

To register as a member or access further information and documentation go to www.kalkbaystjamesra.org or call 079 609 1172