

# Visa rules could add to SAA's hardships

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NEW visa rules, which have already caused a drop in tourist numbers to SA, could be a risk to South African Airways's (SAA's) turnaround plan, says an industry body.

They are also likely to undermine the government's ambitions to grow the sector's contribution to the economy.

The new visa regulations come into effect today, and the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (Satsa) has blamed them for a decline in tourists from key markets such as China and India.

Air China last week cited the new rules and recent xenophobic violence for delaying the start of direct flights to SA.

This prompted Satsa CEO David Frost to ask on Friday: "How is SAA going to implement its turnaround strategy with a decline in tourist arrivals?"

"We have to ask ourselves what the regulations are going to do to our national carrier. What they are going to do to tourism," Mr Frost said.


Parents and guardians travelling with children under 18 years have to provide unabridged birth certificates showing the

names of both parents; minors travelling with one parent need an affidavit of consent from the absent parent; and applications for visas have to be made in person so that biometric information can be recorded.

The more stringent documentation is intended to curb child trafficking, the government has said.

Mr Frost said in China, where there were only two venues for biometrics to be taken, the domestic travel cost to apply for a visa would mean a Chinese traveller would pay double the cost of their holiday in SA.

From September to December last year, the number of tourists from China fell close to 50% and from India 15% year on year,

 **Industry and government task team on new rules has not met**

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