



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

22 December 2006

### LKA102359.E

Sri Lanka: Prevalence of forged identity documents, including passports, visas, birth certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates (2005 - 2006)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### Prevalence of fraudulent identity documents

According to 19 December 2006 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by an official at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo, the Sri Lankan authorities do not systematically collect statistics concerning the prevalence of forged identity documents such as passports, visas, birth certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates. The Official indicated that the Sri Lankan authorities have acknowledged their limited capacity to collect and analyze this type of data and that "[t]he International Organization for Migration (IOM) has undertaken joint capacity building projects with authorities and foreign partners to address these problems" (Canada 19 Dec. 2006).

Media sources from 2005 and 2006 report cases involving the production and/or use of fraudulent identity documents in Sri Lanka (*Daily News* 8 May 2006; *ibid.* 8 July 2005; *Bernama Daily Malaysian News* 28 Apr. 2006; *National Post* 28 Feb. 2005). A 28 February 2005 article by one of Canada's national daily newspapers, the *National Post*, reports that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been involved in forging passports and human trafficking, activities which are "all facilitated by a sophisticated network of numbered companies." A 28 April 2006 article of the *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, a publication of the Bernama Malaysian National News Agency, indicates that many Sri Lankans try to leave the country using forged passports or visas, the majority of them headed to Western countries.

An article in the November 2006 issue of the Colombo-based magazine *Adoh* reports on the prevalence of human trafficking, forged travel documents and corruption among Sri Lankan authorities. The article, written by an investigative journalist, indicates that government officials and airport security are reportedly bribed to allow persons to depart Sri Lanka using forged documents (*Adoh* Nov. 2006, 7). According to the article, forged visa stickers are often used to leave Sri Lanka illegally and can be purchased at a cost ranging from 3,000 Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) [approximately CAD 32 (*XE.com* 20 Dec. 2006a)] to LKR 12,000 [approximately CAD 128 (*ibid.* 20 Dec. 2006b)] (*Adoh* Nov. 2006, 7). The article also notes that forged passports can be purchased from officials at Sri Lanka's Immigration and Emigration Department for a sum ranging from LKR 20,000 [approximately CAD 214 (*XE.com* 20 Dec. 2006c)] to 25,000 LKR [approximately CAD 267 (*ibid.* 20 Dec. 2006d)], more than 10 times

the regular passport fees (*Adoh* Nov. 2006, 8).

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the Official at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo stated that

[f]orged visas are routinely identified by foreign control authorities or airlines at Colombo airport and at transit or destination points connected with Sri Lanka. [It is estimated] that hundreds of persons with some type of forged document are moved monthly through Colombo Airport by criminal syndicates. (Canada 19 Dec. 2006)

The Official further noted that

[d]ue to the large amount of perceived passport fraud, immigration authorities in Gulf states hosting large numbers of Sri Lankan foreign workers, and some visa offices in Colombo, ... introduced the use of biometrics in 2005. These pilot projects have been very successful in identifying persons holding one or more aliases attempting to either apply for a visa or gain entry to a foreign country. Consequently, biometric controls have been introduced on a permanent basis. (Canada 19 Dec. 2006)

According to a *Bernama Daily Malaysian News* article, in April 2006, Colombo International Airport launched a new fraud detection unit to prevent passengers using forged travel documents from boarding flights (28 Apr. 2006). Correspondence from an official at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo indicates, however, that travel using forged documents continues to increase (Canada 19 Dec. 2006). The Official stated that

[f]rom discussions with Gulf state immigration authorities and visa offices using biometrics in Colombo, the identification of improperly issued genuine Sri Lankan documents is growing significantly. This is most visible at the airport by the ever increasing numbers of same day deportees from Gulf States [that use] biometrics on arriving prospective foreign workers. The deportees are invariably those who [have] obtained a passport in a new identity. (ibid.)

The Official also indicated that it was possible to obtain valid travel documents and National Identity Cards (NICs) by fraudulent means (ibid.). The Official noted that

[a]ccording to sources with knowledge of such matters, forged birth certificates can be acquired for as little as USD 5.00, while genuine, but improperly issued birth certificates can be acquired for as little as USD 20.00 each. With these types of birth certificates, genuine NICs can be issued and afterwards genuine passports. (ibid.)

### **Security features of identity documents**

In 19 December 2006 correspondence, the Official at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo provided information concerning the security features of identity documents. The Official stated that

[t]here are no security features in Sri Lankan birth, marriage or death certificates. The Sri Lankan passport contains various security features which,

to our knowledge, have not been made public. Sri Lankan seals, visas and foreign visas issued to Sri Lankans do contain a variety of security features which, to our knowledge, have not been made public. (Canada 19 Dec. 2006)

A 6 November 2006 article in the Colombo-based *Daily News* reports that the Colombo District Secretariat, under the guidance of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs, will begin issuing new birth, marriage and death certificates "using modern Information Technology (IT)." Cited in the article, the Colombo District Secretary indicated that more than 60,000 identity documents will be collected and replaced using the new IT system (*Daily News* 6 Nov. 2006). The Colombo District Secretary anticipated the system would be launched on 21 December 2006. Information regarding whether the system has been launched could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

No further information on security features of Sri Lankan identity documents could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

### **Verification of the authenticity of identity documents**

The Official at the Canadian High Commission in Sri Lanka provided the following information concerning the verification of the authenticity of Sri Lankan identity documents, including passports, visas, and birth, marriage and death certificates:

Birth, marriage and death certificates can be checked with the [Sri Lankan government's] Registrar-General's Department either at the Central Record Room in Colombo, or at the Additional District Registrar's Office, depending on whether the record has been transferred to the central archives or not. The [Canadian High Commission] in Colombo performed approximately 800 verifications in 2006 for [the Canada Border Services Agency] CBSA, [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] CIC, [the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada] IRB and visa offices. Fraud was identified in five to ten percent of the cases. Other foreign visa offices in Colombo have found up to twenty-five percent of the documents checked to be forged.

Sri Lankan passports can be checked with the issuing authority, namely, the Controller, Department of Immigration and Emigration. The same can be done with entry and exit seals and visa and passport endorsements made by its officers.

Foreign passports and visas issued to persons in Sri Lanka can be checked with the issuing visa or consular offices responsible for Sri Lanka, which are located normally in Colombo, but also off-shore in New Delhi or Bangkok. Checks can take anywhere from five minutes to a month depending on the capacity of that office to provide an answer quickly. (19 Dec. 2006)

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

*Adoh* [Colombo]. November 2006. Frederica Jansz. "Human Smuggling, the Rackets Exposed!" Sent to the Research Directorate from an official at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

*Bernama Daily Malaysian News* [Kuala Lumpur]. 28 April 2006. Feizal Samath. "Sri Lankan Airlines Deter Travellers with Forged Documents." (Factiva)

Canada. 19 December 2006. Canadian High Commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Correspondence from an official.

*Daily News* [Colombo]. 6 November 2006. Shirley Wijesinghe. "Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates to Be Issued Using Modern Technology." <<http://www.dailynews.lk/2006/11/06/news40.asp>> [Accessed 7 Nov. 2006]

\_\_\_\_\_. 8 May 2006. E. Weerapperuma. "Immigration Dept. Refuses Entry to over 200 Air, Sea Passengers." <<http://origin.dailynews.lk>> [Accessed 18 May 2006]

\_\_\_\_\_. 8 July 2005. Sarath Malalasekera. "Two Tamil Youth Arrested with Forged Passports." <<http://origin.dailynews.lk>> [Accessed 15 July 2005]

*National Post* [Toronto]. 28 February 2005. John Thompson. "How the Tigers Came to Canada." (Factiva)

XE.com. 20 December 2006a. "Universal Currency Converter Results." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

\_\_\_\_\_. 20 December 2006b. "Universal Currency Converter Results." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

\_\_\_\_\_. 20 December 2006c. "Universal Currency Converter Results." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

\_\_\_\_\_. 20 December 2006d. "Universal Currency Converter Results." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Human Rights Watch (HRW), United Kingdom Home Office, United States Department of State.

**The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.**

