

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

5 May 2014

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India: Availability and prevalence of fraudulent identity documents, including membership cards of political parties (2011-April 2014)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Common Fraudulent Identity Documents

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of criminal justice at Indiana University, who served in the Indian police force for 17 years and continues to conduct research on Indian criminal justice issues, said that most identity documents in India can be faked and/or obtained by fraudulent means and can be "custom ordered in most parts of the country" (Associate Professor 11 Apr. 2014). He said that the most commonly faked documents are ration cards, birth certificates, driving licenses, and municipal documents, and that these fraudulent documents are prevalent throughout India (*ibid.*). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of Transparency International (TI) India, the Indian chapter of the worldwide NGO that fights corruption and promotes transparent and ethical governance (TI n.d.), also indicated that fraudulent identity documents are commonly available in India (*ibid.* 23 Apr. 2014). This source indicated that the most commonly faked documents are the ration card and voter ID card (*ibid.*). He stated that fraudulent documents are more prevalent in the slum areas of metropolitan cities and at border areas of the country, particularly the border with Bangladesh (*ibid.*).

Indian media sources report on several incidents in which people suspected of making fake identity documents were arrested, including for forging voter identity cards (*The Times of India* 25 Sept. 2013; Press Trust of India 7 Feb. 2014; *Hindustan Times* 10 Mar. 2014) and ration cards (*The Times of India* 8 Aug. 2013).

The Times of India reports on a case in which two people in Delhi were arrested for supplying fake driving licenses, birth certificates, and other identity-related documents (17 June 2013). The police reportedly recovered 31 fake driving licenses, 31 fake stamps of several state transport authorities, and holographic stickers from the suspects, who charged between 2,000 Indian rupees (INR) [C\$37 (XE 28 Apr. 2014a)] and 3,000 INR [C\$55 (XE 28 Apr. 2014b)] per document (*The Times of India* 17 June 2013). *The Times of India* also reports on a racket in which civil servants at the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), in cooperation with outside agents, had been selling forged birth certificates for 2,000 INR [C\$37 (XE 28 Apr. 2014a)] to 5,000 INR [C\$91 (XE 28 Apr. 2014c)] apiece (*The Times of India* 23 Sept. 2013). The scam included forged orders by a city metropolitan magistrate, as magistrate orders are required when a birth certificate is issued after the child is more than one year old (*ibid.*). A KMC health department bailiff was one of the suspects arrested (*ibid.*). The Hyderabad-based newspaper, *Deccan Chronicle*, reports that a racket in Kochi, which was under investigation by the police, was charging 5,000 INR [C\$91 (XE 28 Apr. 2014c)] for fake driving licenses, voter's ID and ration cards (22 Apr. 2012).

According to the Associate Professor, fraudulent documents are usually obtained either through "touts" [people who solicit business in a brazen way] that operate near government offices or by directly bribing the clerks that prepare the documents (Associate Professor 11 Apr. 2014). He said that a fraudulent driving license or birth certificate may be obtained for approximately C\$15-20 in most areas of India (*ibid.*). The TI

representative said that fraudulent IDs are commonly procured through touts in different areas who prepare the documents, and that the cost varies from place to place (23 Apr. 2014).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), who is a specialist on human rights in India, described the ration card as an "almost fool-proof" document (14 Apr. 2014). However, the *Herald*, the largest English daily newspaper in the state of Goa, reports on the circulation of fake ration cards in Goa (3 Oct. 2013; *ibid.* 10 Sept. 2013). Similarly, *The Hindu* national newspaper reports on the use of fake ration cards to obtain other identity documents (2 May 2012).

Media sources report of cases in which Bangladeshi nationals have been able to obtain fraudulent Indian identity documents, such as *Aadhaar* cards [an identification number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India that acts as a proof of identity and address (India n.d.)], driving licenses, PAN cards [used for Income Tax] (*The Times of India* 24 Apr. 2012; *The Statesman* 12 Jan. 2013), as well as birth and marriage certificates (*The Times of India* 24 Apr. 2012).

2. Passports

According to the Associate Professor, the authenticity of passports is more reliable than many of the other identity documents, but is "not beyond doubt" (11 Apr. 2014). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Embassy of Canada in New Delhi indicated that the most common fraudulent identity document that they encounter is the national passport since most of the identity documents they encounter relate to migration (Canada 21 Apr. 2014). According to the AHRC representative, having a passport does not necessarily prove identity, since it is possible to obtain one by bribing officials (14 Apr. 2014).

Media sources report of several scams in which passports were able to be procured with the submission of fake identity documents:

- In May 2012, *The Hindu* reported that the Hyderabad police arrested four employees of the regional passport office who were helping agents secure passports with the use of fabricated ration cards and Elector's Photo ID cards (2 May 2012).
- *The Hindu* reports on a passport scam in Tamil Nadu in which 127 Sri Lankans were able to secure Indian passports through the submission of fake identity documents (25 May 2013). A police officer was among those reportedly arrested for involvement with the scam (*ibid.*).
- *Mail Today* reports on a passport scam in Lucknow involving senior officers of the passport office, who issued genuine passports based on forged documents (*Mail Today* 6 July 2013). According to one of the police officers, at least 50 passports were issued to suspected ISI [Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence] agents or to others with "terrorist links" (*ibid.*).

The Hindu explains that passports seized in fraud cases were "'genuine'" but the documents used to obtain them were fake (*The Hindu* 26 Apr. 2012). *The Hindu* also explains some of the difficulties of verifying documents during the passport application process as follows:

Ration cards, Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC), bank passbook and secondary school certificate memo of marks submitted by applicants for identity and address proof do not have any security marks. With fraudsters using high-precision printers and computers to prepare fake documents, determining the documents' authenticity by naked eye or physical verification is not possible. (*ibid.*)

The Times of India describes the following cases of people being arrested for using fake Indian passports:

- In 2014, two suspected Sri Lankan nationals were arrested in Pune airport for using fake Indian passports (*The Times of India* 12 Mar. 2014). Authorities discovered the passports were fake before the suspects left the country when they scanned the passports and the photos did not match the computerized records available (*ibid.*).
- Two Myanmar nationals were arrested in 2013 after being deported from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after travelling to there from Pune on fake Indian passports (*ibid.*). The passports were not discovered as fake until the suspects arrived in the UAE (*ibid.*).

The AHRC representative was aware of cases in which people were able to travel with fabricated Indian documents, but were then arrested when returning to India (14 Apr. 2014).

According to the AHRC representative, fabricated passports cost between 3,000 INR [C\$ 55 (XE 28 Apr. 2014b)] and 10,000 INR [C\$182 (XE 28 Apr. 2014d)] (AHRC 14 Apr. 2014). According to the *Times of India*, touts in front of the regional passport office in Chennai offer assistance in getting a *tatkal* [express service]

passport for 8,000 INR [C\$146 (XE 28 Apr. 2014e)] to 10,000 INR [C\$182 (XE 28 Apr. 2014d)] by procuring verification certificates from officials, noting that it is difficult to ascertain if the certificates are genuine or fake (*Times of India* 20 May 2012). *Deccan Chronicle* reports that a racket under investigation in Kochi was charging 25,000 INR [C\$455 (XE 28 Apr. 2014f)] for fake passports (22 Apr. 2012).

3. Aadhaar Cards

According to the Associate Professor, the unique ID numbers given to individuals based on biometric identifiers [also known as Aadhaar] by the Unique Identity Project are "'high tech' and beyond reproach" (11 Apr. 2014). However, media sources report on some cases of fraud involving Aadhaar cards, including a scam in which people used fake Aadhaar cards to try to obtain voter identity cards, which was uncovered by the Delhi Election Commission (*Mail Today* 14 Aug. 2013; *The Pioneer* 8 Aug. 2013). According to the *Pioneer* newspaper, the same Aadhaar number was used for obtaining 30 voter identity cards for residents of Seelampur (*ibid.*). In another case, the *Hindustan Times* reports of a fake document scam involving the arrest of an Aadhaar card agent and the seizure of five Aadhaar cards believed to be forged (10 Mar. 2014). In another example, the *Statesman* reports of a case in which a Bangladeshi man claimed to have been able to receive an Aadhaar card by paying 2,500 INR [C\$46 (XE 28 Apr. 2014g)] in bribes (*The Statesman* 12 Jan. 2013).

4. Fraudulent Medical Records, School Records and Police Reports

According to the Associate Professor, fraudulent medical records, school records and police records are prevalent in India (11 Apr. 2014). Similarly, the TI representative said that there are fraudulent school, medical and police documents available (23 Apr. 2014). In addition, the Canadian official said that fraudulent medical records, school records and police records used in immigration applications are "regularly encountered" by the embassy (21 Apr. 2014).

According to the AHRC representative, fraudulent or fake medical records are "easy to obtain" and can be "easily bought," particularly from private doctors or hospitals (14 Apr. 2014).

The Times of India reports on a racket in which a gang was selling fake degrees from universities, including three located in Kanpur, Agra and Bareilly, as well as marksheets and certificates from [Uttar Pradesh] Board High Schools (25 Sept. 2013). The Srinagar-based daily newspaper *Kashmir Images* reports on organizations that openly advertise the production of fake school records, including the production of university and college degrees, diplomas, transcripts and "packages" containing multiple documents at a reduced price (*Kashmir Images* 24 Aug. 2012). The same source notes that there have been cases in which doctors were later found to have fake medical degrees (*ibid.*). The government reportedly introduced a bill in 2011 to establish a national database of academic awards in order to deter fraudulent academic records (*ibid.*). Information on the status of this bill could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, according to the TI representative, there has been a reduction of fraud in school records as a result of the "use of technology" (23 Apr. 2014).

According to the AHRC representative, police documents are more difficult to obtain fraudulently than medical records (AHRC 14 Apr. 2014). He also noted that some states have searchable databases of First Information Reports [FIRs] making it harder for a fake report to go undetected (*ibid.*). The Associate Professor said that police reports might be genuine if they are printed on official government stationary and contain an official seal, but also said these "should not be used as a certificate of authenticity" (11 Apr. 2014).

5. Fraudulent Political Party Membership Cards

According to the AHRC representative, political party membership cards "can be bought or can be easily forged" and do not have a particular purpose or value in India (14 Apr. 2014). The Associate Professor said that

[p]olitical party cards are totally fraudulent. Most parties do not have any documentation of their members and generally do not issue membership cards. Some local units may provide one to their local members but there is little authenticity of these. (11 Apr. 2014)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Centre for Public Affairs; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Asian Centre for Human Rights; ecoi.net; Freedom House; Human Rights Watch; India – Embassy of India in Ottawa, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Crime Records Bureau; Interpol; United Nations – Refworld, UN Office of Drugs and Crime; US – Department of State.

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