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China: The second-generation Resident Identity Card; security features; and how the card can be tested for authenticity

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In 2004, the government of China began issuing a second-generation Resident Identity (ID) Card to its citizens (Canada 9 Dec. 2004; Xinhua 30 Mar. 2004). The new computer-readable ID card replaces the first-generation card that has been in circulation for more than 20 years (ibid.; ibid. 7 Mar. 2006). China's major cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen were the first to begin issuing the new ID card (ibid. 28 Jan. 2004; Canada 9 Dec. 2004). Information on the number of second-generation cards issued as of June 2007 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response; however, sources consulted indicated that by March 2006, over 100 million second-generation ID cards had already been issued (*China Daily* 17 Mar. 2006; *InfoWorld* 9 Mar. 2006). It is estimated that approximately 800 million second-generation cards will be issued by the end of 2008 (*CardTechnology* 1 Apr. 2006; Xinhua 7 Mar. 2006).

### Description of card

The second-generation resident ID card measures 85.6 millimetres by 54 millimetres (Xinhua 28 Jan. 2004). The new card is covered with a "special coating" (China n.d.), described by one source as a "hard wearing" polyester plastic (Xinhua 28 Jan. 2004). Unlike the old card, the new card contains cardholder data on both sides, which apparently allows ethnic minorities to have information in both Chinese Han characters and ethnic minority characters (CRI 24 May 2007). The second-generation card is reportedly the same colour for both men and women, and the text on the card is written horizontally rather than vertically (*Taipei Times* 28 Jan. 2005; see also *China Daily* 30 Mar. 2004; *People's Daily* 21 May 2004). The colour of the second-generation resident ID card was not identified in the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

One side of the new resident ID card includes the cardholder's name, gender, ethnicity, date of birth, residence, ID number and photograph (Xinhua 30 Mar. 2004; see also Xinhua 7 Mar. 2006; *Taipei Times* 28 Jan. 2005). The cardholder's photograph appears on the right hand side of the card (ibid.; Xinhua 30 Mar. 2004; Southcn.com 29 Mar. 2004; ibid. 20 Mar. 2004), while the ID number appears at the bottom (ibid. 29 Mar. 2004; Xinhua 30 Mar. 2004; see also *Taipei Times* 28 Jan. 2005).

The ID number has 18 digits: digits 1 to 6 represent the county or district in which the cardholder is registered; digits 7 to 14 represent the cardholder's birth date; digits 15 to 17 is a sequence of numbers for persons who have the same birth date and are registered within the same county or district (odd numbers represent males and even numbers represent females); and, the 18th digit is a number that is calculated using the previous 17 digits in a formula (*Shenzhen Daily* 25 May 2005; see also US 7 July 2004). Information on the formula used to determine the 18th digit could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The reverse side of the card has a design of China's national emblem, found in the upper left-hand corner (CRI 24 May 2007; Southcn.com 20 Mar. 2004), decorative patterns and an image of the Great Wall of China (Xinhua 7 Mar. 2006; *ibid.* 30 Mar. 2004; CRI 24 May 2007). The reverse side of the card also identifies the validity periods of the card and the issuing authority (Xinhua 7 Mar. 2006; *ibid.* 30 Mar. 2004). A 28 January 2005 article in *Taipei Times*, an English-language daily Taiwanese newspaper (*Taipei Times* n.d.), indicates that the reverse side of the card also includes the following information: "names of the cardholder's parents, spouse, place of birth, place of residence and type of military classification, as well as a column for notes relating to important information not contained in the other categories."

The second-generation ID card, referred to as a "smart card," has an embedded digital microchip (China n.d.; Xinhua 28 Jan. 2004). The microchip contains cardholder information, including name, sex, birth date, address and household registration location (Strategies Télécoms & Multimédia Mar. 2005). Fingerprints were initially intended to be stored in the microchip; however, the inclusion of fingerprints has reportedly not occurred (*ibid.*; see also *Taipei Times* 28 Jan. 2005).

The new ID card's embedded microchip can apparently only be read by "special" card readers (*Shenzhen Daily* 10 Feb. 2006). The microchip reportedly uses radio frequency identification (RFID), which allows data stored in the chip to be read by card readers from a distance of 20 to 30 centimetres (InfoWorld 9 Mar. 2006). According to an article in the April 2006 issue of *CardTechnology*, "the global magazine of smart cards and personal identification" (*CardTechnology* n.d.), information on the chip can be read in eight-tenths of a second (*ibid.* 1 Apr. 2006).

According to a Public Security Bureau (PSB) official of Shenzhen, cited in a 10 February 2006 article of the city's *Shenzhen Daily*, only the PSB has the technology required to write information in the embedded microchips that is capable of being read by authorized machines. The Shenzhen official stated that the information found in the second-generation ID card "cannot be duplicated, as the process of decryption of its chip information could take as much as 10 million years" (*Shenzhen Daily* 10 Feb. 2006). Only local companies in China are reportedly allowed to participate in the production of the new ID cards (InfoWorld 9 Mar. 2006).

The second-generation ID card is expected to facilitate certain activities for minors, such as opening bank accounts and travelling by air (*People's Daily* 21 May 2004; *China Daily* 30 June 2003). It is also anticipated that the new card, connected to a national network, could eliminate the occurrence of duplicate ID numbers (*Shenzhen Daily* 25 May 2005). Duplication of ID numbers reportedly occurred under the previous card system in which numbers were manually created; it is estimated that as many as one million Chinese citizens could have overlapping ID numbers (*ibid.*).

Two samples of Resident Identity Cards are attached to this Response. The samples are faithful enlargements of photographs found in a 30 March 2004 article of the Beijing-based *China Daily* and an 18 February 2007 article of the news Web site *China Digital Times*.

## Issuance

Resident ID cards are issued by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) at the county level in the area in which the cardholder permanently resides (China 28 June 2003). Under China's law on Resident Identity Cards, all citizens aged 16 and older are required to apply for a Resident Identity Card (*ibid.*). Persons under the age of 16 are eligible to obtain an ID card (*ibid.*; *People's Daily* 21 May 2004; *China Daily* 30 June 2003); however, their guardian must apply for the card on their behalf (*ibid.*; China 28 June 2003).

If a resident ID card expires, is lost or damaged, the cardholder must make an application for a new one (*ibid.*). A 28 January 2005 *Taipei Times* article also notes that since the resident ID card is no longer paper-based, a cardholder must apply for a new card if changes to such categories as residence or marital status need to be made.

For further information on the issuance of Resident Identity Cards, please refer to the attached copy of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Resident Identity Cards.

## Validity periods

The validity periods of resident identity cards vary based on the age of the cardholder (China 28 June 2003). Second-generation ID cards issued to citizens under the age of 16 are valid for 5 years (*ibid.*; *China Daily* 30 June 2003). Resident ID cards issued to citizens aged 16 to 25 and 26 to 45 are valid for 10 years and 20 years, respectively (China 28 June 2003; Newsgd.com 30 Mar. 2004). Resident ID cards issued to citizens aged 46 and older do not expire (*ibid.*; China 28 June 2003). Once a resident ID card expires,

application must be made for a new one (ibid.).

## Cost

Sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that the cost of the second-generation ID card is 20 yuan [approximately CAD 2.80 (Canada 14 June 2007)] (*China Daily* 30 Mar. 2004; China n.d.). If a person loses his or her resident ID card, the replacement cost is 40 yuan [approximately CAD 5.60 (Canada 14 June 2007)] (China n.d.). Citizens in rural areas living on social assistance and "needy" rural citizens are reportedly exempt from paying these fees when applying to replace their first-generation card with a second-generation one (ibid.).

A temporary resident ID card costs 10 yuan [approximately CAD 1.40 (Canada 14 June 2007)] (China n.d.). Under China's law on Resident Identity Cards, a temporary resident ID card may be issued to a citizen when he or she "is in urgent need" of a resident identity card during the application period of his or her regular ID card (China 28 June 2003). The law notes that in certain areas of the country it could take up to 90 days for a resident ID card to be issued (ibid.); however a 17 March 2006 *South China Morning Post* article notes that the time required to issue the new second-generation ID card could be reduced to 30 days (see also *News9.com* 30 Mar. 2004).

## Testing for authenticity

Unlike the old laminated paper ID card, the second-generation ID card is designed with a technology that is difficult to counterfeit (China n.d.; see also *Xinhua* 30 Mar. 2004; ibid. 24 Jan. 2004). A 28 January 2005 *Taipei Times* article notes that the new card has 21 features that are "duplication-proof;" however, the article does not identify these features (ibid. 28 Jan. 2005).

According to a 10 February 2006 *Shenzhen Daily* article posted on the Chinese government's official Web site, second-generation ID cards can be verified for authenticity through the use of card readers. The article states that

[w]hen an ID card is put in the [card reader] machine, a small device similar to a notebook PC [personal computer], the information displayed on the card can be seen on the machine's screen. If a fake card is used, no information is visible. (*Shenzhen Daily* 10 Feb. 2006)

The card readers have been installed in such places as banks, customs and airports (*Shenzhen Daily* 10 Feb. 2006). The use of the readers is reportedly "strictly regulated" (ibid.); only ten manufacturers in China have been authorized to produce them (ibid.; *CardTechnology* 1 Apr. 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.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada, the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, and the Canadian Consulate General in Guangzhou did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. Research conducted by a researcher at the Institute for International Studies at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia did not yield any information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** *Asia Times*, China - Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada, Factiva,

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