



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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CHN43360.E

China: National Resident Identity Cards; background information; description; issuance procedures
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

This Response incorporates information from CHN42321.E of 20 April 2004 and CHN42691.E of 12 July 2004.

Background

In 1985, the People's Republic of China announced the Regulations on Resident Identification Cards (RIC), which it began implementing in 1986 (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004). The Regulations were revised in 1991 and 1997 (ibid.) and the Detailed Rules of Implementation were amended in 1999 (US Law Library of Congress 7 July 2004). In June 2003, China adopted the new Law of the PRC on Resident Identification Cards, effective 1 January 2004 (ibid.). Although the Regulations were repealed with the entry into force of the new law, RICs issued under the previous regulations will remain valid until their expiry date (ibid.).

During a 2003 interview with a reporter, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) official in charge of the Second-Generation Resident ID Card Replacement Office stated that:

[t]he Resident ID Card is a uniform legal document issued by the state to identify the status of the civilian. In compliance with legislation regulations, the items of the Resident ID Card shall include name, gender, nationality, date of birth, the address of the permanent residential place, the number of the Resident ID Card, the photo of the cardholder, the period of validity and the organization that signed and issued the card. The Resident ID Card number is the one and only lifetime code for the identity, compiled uniformly by the Public Security Bureau. The Resident ID Card and the identity code are mainly used for the identification of the status of the citizen, to safeguard a civilian's legal right and facilitate a civilian[']s ... conduct [of] social activities.

[...]

According to legal regulations, the ID Card in our country only serves to be a legal document, no other use (AIT Event 2003).

Similarly, the US Law Library of Congress, citing Chinese State Council Decision No. 15, issued on 26 August 1999, stated the following:

[c]itizen identification numbers are the sole, lifelong representative numbers drawn up and determined by the state for every citizen from their day of birth, and they will broadly apply to aspects of China's citizens' handling of matters involving political, economic, social life, and other rights and interests. The MPS [Ministry of Public Security] is responsible for the work of enforcement of the drawing up and organization of citizen identification numbers (7 July 2004, 3).

An important official identity document, the RIC is used when applying for "various kinds of registration such as registration of elections, marriage, *hukou*, enrolment in schools, entry and exit permits, social insurance, personal credit [...] and bank remittances etc. " (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004).

First-Generation ID cards

Prior to 2004, two versions of the first-generation RIC were most widely used in China (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004) (the older version, which contains a 15-digit ID number, and the newer version, which contains an 18-digit ID number (ibid.). The newer version of the ID card was first issued in October 1999 (ibid.).

The first-generation RIC could have one of three different validity periods: 10 years, 20 years and indefinite (ibid.). Residents aged 16 to 25 receive identity cards valid for 10 years; those aged 26 to 44 are issued identity cards valid for 20 years; and those aged 45 and up are issued a permanent identity card (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004).

The first-generation RIC is relatively easy to counterfeit as it is made of laminated paper, and can reportedly be bought on the streets for a "few hundred *yuan*" [300 yuan= Cdn. \$44.39 (Xe.com 22 Feb. 2005)] (U.S. Law Library of Congress 7 July 2004). In addition, these cards, which are issued by provincial authorities, do not have a nationwide tracking number so fraud detection is difficult (ibid.). According to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) official in charge of the Second-Generation ID Card Replacement Office, the first-generation ID card "adopts photochemical reaction and lithographic as the main printing technology, which can be forged or imitated easily" (AIT Event 2003). The official also stated that the government had encountered serious problems with forged RICs being used in committing crimes (ibid.).

According to information provided to the Research Directorate by a program officer with the Intelligence and Interdiction Unit of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in 1999,

[b]oth counterfeit cards and fraudulently obtained but legitimately produced cards are obtainable and in circulation, and ... possession of a legitimately produced identity card does not guarantee that it was legitimately obtained.

...

[Regarding] possible indicators as to whether or not an identity card was legitimately produced:

On counterfeit cards the background pattern of interwoven lines that appears on both sides of the card may have the appearance of a series of discrete dots, like a silk screen effect; on legitimately produced cards these will appear as continuous lines, due to the offset printing technique used.

Counterfeit cards may have handcut corners of uneven radius; legitimately produced cards have die cut corners of consistent radius.

On counterfeit cards the background pattern on the face side of the card may not extend right to the edge of the card but instead fades out, leaving an unprinted area; on legitimately produced cards the background printing extends to all edges of the cards on both sides.

On counterfeit cards some details of the outline map of China may be incorrect, the shape of Hainan island off the southern coast may be shaped inaccurately with a more oblique appearance, the same may also be true of the Heilongjiang peninsula in the northeast; on legitimately produced cards, all map details will be correct (CIC 24 Mar. 1999).

Second-Generation ID cards

In order to decrease the incidence of fraud and counterfeiting, the Chinese government introduced the second-generation ID card (also called the "smart card") (U.S. Law Library of Congress 7 July 2004; AIT Event 2003). In order to avoid duplicates, each resident will be issued a nationally unique identity card number (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004). The second-generation ID cards, which are made with laminated paper, contain personal information on an embedded microchip and a digital photograph of the resident (ibid.). The card, which has new security features, is covered with a special coating and is printed using new technology (ibid.; U.S. Law Library of Congress 7 July 2004). The information is entered using encryption technology, which makes unauthorized access more difficult than with the first-generation cards (ibid.). Although the card contains a digitized version of the bearer's photograph, which can be accessed by the

police, the government has decided not to use biometrics, such as facial recognition, for now (ibid.).

The second-generation ID card began circulating in 2004 (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004). Major cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, began issuing the second-generation ID card in the second half of 2004 (ibid.; see also *China Daily* 28 Jan. 2004). Replacement of the old paper cards is expected to be completed throughout China by the end of 2008 (*China Daily* 28 Jan. 2004; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004).

Description

Chinese Resident Identity Cards contain personal information such as the name, gender, ethnic nationality, date of birth, date of issue, term of validity, ID card number and residential address (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004). According to the same source, the following information applies to the first-generation ID cards:

Information on the ID card is entered using simplified Chinese characters

Background printing on the front of the card consists of a green web[bed] pattern radiating from the outline of China

Individual's photograph is printed [i]n the upper left-hand corner

Green web[bed] pattern continues across the photograph

Red seal of Public Security Bureau [i]n the lower left-hand corner

Starting on 1 Jan, 1996, a laminate containing optical variable ink of the words "CHINA" in English and Chinese and the picture of the "Great Wall" covers the photo side of the cards

The back of the card has a reddish brown guilloche in the centre. Above the flourish is a red national emblem and the back of the card is all covered by a reddish brown web[bed] design. It also contains concentric circles made up of wavy interlocking green lines...

On the reverse of the card, the 4th set of interwoven lines from the top right hand corner is missing an intersecting line resulting in a shape resembling a banana.

Cards issued in Special Economic Zones (SEZ) have a blue web[bed] pattern on the front instead of green. [They] also ha[ve] a holographic feature in the upper right hand corner. The back of the card has a green web[bed] design and blue concentric circles

[Older version] ID card numbers contains 15 digits [and newer] version [contains] 18 digits.

-1st - 2nd digits - province

-3rd - 4th digits - city or county

-5th - 6th digits - districts

-7th - 12th digits (15 digits style) and 7th - 14th digits (18 digits style) - year, month and day of birth

-13th to 15th digits (15 digits style) and 15th to 18th digits (18 digits style) - random numbers to identify individual when there is more than one person in the same district with same name and DOB

-old version (15 digits) - last digit in an odd number for male and an even number for female

-new version (18 digits) - second-to-last digit is an odd number for male and an even number for female

-e.g. Beijing city... ID card numbers start with 110100

-e.g. Guangzhou city... ID card numbers start with 440100

In 24 February 2005 correspondence, the Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong further specified that the RIC is so designed that the red webbing on the reverse of the card must intersect with the wavy

interlocking green lines.

During a 2003 interview with a reporter, the MPS official in charge of the Second Generation Resident ID Card Replacement Office described the second-generation RIC as follows:

[t]he newly designed Resident ID Card is a single paged card with the length of 86.5 mm and the width of 54 mm.

The front side of the card has the printed national emblem, the name of the card, the Great Wall design, the signature of the issuing authority, period of validity and colorful decorative pattern. The national emblem is [in] the top left corner, making the whole card solemn and firm with the matching characters- PRC Resident ID Card, which nicely expresses the theme. The design on the back is the Great Wall design, signifying everlasting peace and order in China. With mountains in the far end as background, the Great Wall design seems deep and serene. The shading is colorful twisted cord, which is fresh and elegant, making the whole card look pure and decent.

On the back of the card there is a photo of the holder and the items of registration (name, gender, nationality, date of birth, residential address and the number of the Resident ID Card) with colorful decorative pattern. The base color of the pattern is colorful twisting pattern and the color from left to right is light blue - light purple - light blue (AIT Event 2003).

Issuance Procedures

With respect to application and issuance procedures, the same MPS official stated that:

[f]irstly, all citizens who are 16 or over [...] can go to the local public security bureau within three months after they reach the age of 16 to process the application procedure. They shall submit Resident Registered Permanent Residence Book, a photo of the person who applies, fill [in] the Resident ID Card Application Registration Form and pay the production cost for the card. For the person under the age of 16, if they wish to get [the] Resident ID Card, their patronage shall complete the procedure on their behalf. Secondly, after the Public Security Bureau checks and finds no faults with the application material versus the content of the Resident Registered Permanent Residence Book, it will deliver the card application information to the superior organization. Thirdly, the Public Security Bureau at county (city) level and the Public Security Bureau at city district level [are] in charge of the auditing, signing and issuing and then [they] will hand it onward to Resident ID Card Production Center (Station) at provincial Public Security Bureau. Fourthly, Resident ID Card production Center (Station) will produce the card according to the information they have got and then return the card to the organization that is in charge of the card affairs. Fifthly, the organization that is in charge of the card affairs will first make verification and inspection, then it will issue the card to the citizen. According to legislation, the Public Security Bureau should issue the card within 60 days after the citizen has handed in the Resident ID Card Application Registration Form. For the areas where transport is not convenient, the extended time period shall not exceed 30 days (AIT Events 2003).

The PBS of each city and district of permanent residence issues the Chinese Resident Identity Cards (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004). The new ID card is issued based on the information found in the *hukou*, and the address on the card should be the same as the address of the household registration (*ibid.*). When a new card is issued, the old card must be surrendered to the PSB (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 6 Feb. 2005).

Chinese citizens must apply in person to the Public Security Bureau (PSB) to obtain a RIC (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 6 Feb. 2005). The applicant's photograph is taken by the PSB at the time of application (*ibid.*). A fee is required to obtain a new ID card; a fee is also required if a replacement is requested as a result of loss or damage (*ibid.*).

In 27 January 2005 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a doctoral student at the Institute for International Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, who specializes in migration, citizenship and social policy in China, stated, after consulting with a Chinese lecturer, that the cost of obtaining an ID card varies from one location to another. The source added that, since 2003, criticism by the national government has forced provincial governments to lower the cost of obtaining ID cards (27 Jan. 2005).

When requesting a replacement for a lost card, the applicant must report the circumstances of the loss to the PSB (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong. 6 Feb. 2005). The applicant may request a "loss

certification" from the PSB as proof that he/she has reported the loss of the card (ibid.). No advertisement (or "announcement") in a newspaper or anywhere else is required for a lost card (ibid.).

Ordinary Chinese citizens are not required to carry their identity card on their person at all times (ibid.). However, when the PSB asks to check a person's identity, he/she is obligated to present official identity documents (ibid.). If unable to produce such documents, under normal circumstances, the person is allowed to return home or to his/her work unit or any other place where his/her identity documents are kept, or where records of his/her identity are kept (ibid.). However, in some cases, the PSB might detain the person until relatives or friends bring the identity documents to them (ibid.).

If a person moves to another residential address during the validity period of his/her ID card, he/she is not required to amend or replace his/her ID card (ibid.). The information will be updated if and when a new card is issued for any other reason (ibid.).

If a citizen of Hong Kong decides to live, work, study, or settle permanently or even temporarily in mainland China, he/she can apply to the PSB for an ID card, and must provide reasons for requiring the card (ibid.). Within 183 days of the issuance of an ID card to a Hong Kong citizen, he/she must start paying taxes (ibid.). After one year of continuous residence, the Hong Kong citizen is required to obtain a "no criminal record" certificate (ibid.).

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.

References

AIT Events. Beijing. Smart Card Forum of China (SCFC). 2003. <<http://www.ait-events.com/Oenglish/luntan/hyxx/2003/5.html>> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2004]

Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong. 24 February 2005. Correspondence from an official.

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