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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Sri Lanka: The National Identity Card (NIC); its issuance, cost, validity period, security features and description of front and back [LKA105433.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Handwritten NIC

In correspondence to the Research Directorate, the Canadian High Commission in Colombo stated that it had no information regarding changes to NICs since 2008 (Canada 16 Feb. 2016). For the description and security features of the handwritten NIC, see Response to Information Request LKA102742. A sample of the handwritten NIC is attached to this Response (Attachment 1).

2. Printed NIC

Sources report that as of February 2014, the Sri Lankan government would begin to issue printed NICs (*Sunday Observer* 2 Feb. 2014; *Daily Mirror* 25 Jan. 2014). In an article published in January 2014, *The Daily Mirror*, an English-language newspaper in Sri Lanka, cites the Commissioner General of the Registration of Persons as stating that "[w]e still issue hand-written IDs" (ibid.). The same source reports that on 28 February 2014, the first batch of approximately 200 new NICs were issued with printed data and that "the data will no longer be handwritten as before" (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014). According to a February 2014 article published by the *Sunday Observer*, an English-language Sri Lankan newspaper, the printed NICs would contain the following features:

- Front page: the personal registration number, the photograph, date of issue, and the signature stamp of the Commissioner General of the Registration of Persons will be printed;
- Back page: personal data, including name, address, date of birth, occupation [printed instead of handwritten as was done in the handwritten NIC in the past];
- The NIC is printed "on special security proof paper" and the card is laminated with cut edges "to give a finishing" (*Sunday Observer* 2 Feb. 2014).

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

Sources report that the new cards would be bilingual and issued in both the Sinhala and Tamil languages (ibid.; *Daily Mirror* 28 Feb. 2014). The *Sunday Observer* further specifies that, when issuing the new

NICs, the personal data of the NIC holder will first be entered into a computer system in English and then transliterated into Sinhala and Tamil (*Sunday Observer* 2 Feb. 2014). A sample of a printed NIC that was published in an article by the *Sunday Observer* is attached to this Response (Attachment 2).

2.1 Issuance Procedures

According to information provided on the website of the Government Information Centre of Sri Lanka, NICs can be issued to a Sri Lankan citizen 16 years of age or older (Sri Lanka 7 Oct. 2010). First time applications can be obtained from and submitted to the *Grama Niladhari* [the Village Headman (ibid. 16 Aug. 2010)] of the applicant's residential area; or to the estate superintendent, if the applicant resides in an estate; or to a school principal or the *Parivenadhipathi* of a *Pirivena* [Buddhist monastic college (ibid. Jan. 2013)] for students (ibid. 7 Oct. 2010). According to the website of the Government Information Centre, applicants who wish to obtain NICs for "urgent purposes" may utilize a "one-day service" (ibid. 31 Oct. 2012). The applicant must appear in person at the Department of Registration of Persons to avail of this service, and if they are unable to present themselves, a "family member whose relationship ... is supported by documentary evidence or [a] person who possesses an authorization letter by the applicant can obtain the applicant's NIC" (ibid.).

The fees for NIC applications are as follows:

- for first time applications: 3.00 Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) (C\$0.027) for applicants under 17 years of age, 13.00 LKR for applicants older than 17 (ibid. 7 Oct. 2010);
- 15.00 LKR for a "duplicate" NIC, "in respect of a lost ID card" (ibid. 5 Oct. 2010);
- 500.00 LKR (C\$4.50) for a one-day service NIC (ibid. 31 Oct. 2012).

Information on the documents required to apply for NIC for the first time, and to obtain a duplicate, which is posted on the website of the Government Information Centre, is attached to this Response (Attachments 3 and 4 respectively).

3. 12-Digit NIC Number

According to a January 2016 article by Hiru News, a news portal of the Colombo-based Asia Broadcasting Corporation Private Ltd. (Hiru News n.d.), the government of Sri Lanka "has decided to issue a 12 digit national identification number card from the 1st of January 2016" (ibid. 1 Jan. 2016). Similarly, a 2 January 2016 article published by Sri Lanka Mirror, a "trilingual news website officially registered with the Ministry of Media and Information in Sri Lanka" (Sri Lanka Mirror n.d.), cites the Department of Registration of Persons as stating that a new national identity card would "begin to be printed within the next couple of months in accordance with international standards" (ibid. 2 Jan. 2016). News Radio, a news website of the Sri Lankan radio network TNL (TNL Radio Network n.d.), states that, according to the Department of Registration of Persons, the "previous 9 digit national identity card number will be printed while issuing the new 12 digit NICs ... the previous 9 digit National ID number will be printed at the back of the new ID card" (News Radio 2 Jan. 2016). The same source reports that "[t]he first four digits of the NIC will contain the year of birth while a zero will be included before the final four digits" and that "the public can use the existing national identity card however the 12 digit national identity cards will be issued for the new applicants" (ibid.). According to sources, cards with a 12-digit number will not have an English letter as they did previously (ibid.; Sri Lanka Mirror 2 Jan. 2016).

Hiru News reports that the 12-digit cards "will be first printed according to the existing system. However, the Department of Registration of Persons has taken measures to print the ID on a plastic card from February onward" (Hiru News 1 Jan. 2016). News Radio similarly reports that NICs with a 12-digit number will be printed on a plastic card as of February 2016 (News Radio 2 Jan. 2016).

4. Electronic NICs

Sources report that the Sri Lankan government plans to introduce new electronic National Identity Cards (e-NICs) (SDW 15 Oct. 2015; Sri Lanka 4 Sept. 2014; *The Sunday Times* 31 Aug. 2014). According to a 15 October 2015 article published by Security Document World (SDW), a "web-based news portal" that provides information on "security-document and human identity centred solutions" (SDW n.d.), Sri Lankan officials confirmed that the e-NICS would be "issued to all before the end of 2017" (SDW 15 Oct. 2015). In November 2015, the *Sunday Times*, an English-language newspaper in Sri Lanka, cited the Internal Affairs Minister as stating that electronic NICs would not be issued for another two years (*The Sunday Times* 15 Nov. 2015). In contrast, a January 2016 article by a Sri Lankan news website, News First, quotes the Department of Registration of Persons as indicating that "they will begin to issue Electronic National Identity Cards within the next three months" (News First 6 Jan. 2016).

According to the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence, electronic NICs will include "the person's photograph, biometric authentication, bio data, fingerprints, and also the blood group" (Sri Lanka 4 Sept. 2014). Sources report that the new NIC will be available for persons 15 years of age and older (*The Sunday Times* 15 Nov. 2015; The Republic Square 26 Aug. 2014).

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: Agriteam Canada; Canada – Canada Border Services Agency, High Commission in Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka – High Commission in Ottawa, Lanka Logistics & Technologies Ltd.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; ecoi.net; Factiva; Keesing's Reference Systems; Pakistan – National Database & Registration Authority; Sri Lanka – Consulate in Toronto, Department of Registration of Persons; Embassy in Washington DC, High Commissions in Canberra, Ottawa and London, Ministry of Defence; United Kingdom – Foreign and Commonwealth Office; United Nations – ICAO, Refworld; United States – Department of State, Embassy to Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Attachments

1. Keesing's Reference Systems. N.d. "Sri Lanka - Domestic Identity Card: General (B1)." <<http://www.documentchecker.com/rdo.dll/id>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2016]

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