

# Fake birth-paper racket busted at Kolkata Municipal Corporation head office

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KOLKATA: The civic top brass and police have busted a fake birth-certificate racket that operated from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) headquarters and had networks in all the borough and ward offices.

The gang had been operating for several years and it took a six-month-long investigation by

the civic body to identify the key players, who include some KMC health department employees.

Ashit Saraswati, a KMC health department bailiff, was arrested 10 days ago after a woman complained to the police that he had taken money from her for a birth certificate but gave her a fake one. Though Saraswati is posted in Behala, he used to visit the civic head quarters at S N Banerjee Road frequently. He was earlier arrested a few months ago for issuing a certificate with an invalid KMC logo, but was released as the complainant withdrew the FIR.

That's not all. The police have found that a section of civic employees, with the help of the touts, has been regularly forging documents and even the signature of a metropolitan magistrate to sell birth certificates at high rates. "Depending on the urgency of the applicant, who approaches a tout because he does not have valid documents or to avoid harassment, a birth certificate can be sold for anything between Rs 2,000 and 5,000," said a KMC official.

A recent raid by a civic team at a tout's hideout took the officials by surprise. "We have found among other documents fake copies of orders issued in the name of a city metropolitan magistrate. The touts have forged the signature of the magistrate concerned," said Debasis Sen, the special officer of the KMC health department.

KMC issues a birth certificate within a year of the baby's birth. But in case someone applies for a certificate after a year of the child's birth or needs to make a change in the existing document, he or she has to first obtain an order from a city-based metropolitan magistrate. Now, with the order in hand, the person can approach the health department of the civic body to make the necessary change in the birth certificate.

This process takes almost a month and a half, while the touts do the same in seven days in lieu of money. But, there is also the risk of getting fake certificates in such deals.

This is not the first time that the KMC health department officials have come to know about the existence of such a racket. Four months ago, Sen had caught some touts red-handed from outside the civic headquarters on S N Banerjee Road. They were caught issuing fake birth certificates with forged signatures of senior civic officials and the seal of the officials concerned.

The most startling revelation had then come from a drug peddler, who produced a KMC certificate at the court claiming that he was a minor. Later, the court found that it was a fake birth certificate. when produced before a city court, produced a KMC birth certificate claiming that he was a minor and be sent to a juvenile home. However, further probe revealed that the certificate which he had produced, was fake.

It may be recalled that after the civic body lodged an FIR recently against a tout, police took him into custody. Though he was released later, further investigation revealed that he had network from Borough IX in Alipore to Borough XV in Garden Reach. A large number of fake certificates were subsequently recovered from the KMC's Alipore office.

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With the touts gaining control in the civic corridors, municipal commissioner Khalil Ahmed recently intensified vigil inside the KMC headquarters after being instructed by Atin Ghosh, the member, mayor-in-council overseeing the KMC health department.

Ghosh expressed his concern on the rampant forgery of magistrates' signature.

"I am aware of the recent development and about activities of the racket. We will take appropriate action," Ghosh said.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Fake-birth-paper-racket-busted-at-Kolkata-Municipal-Corporation-head-office/articleshow/22915402.cms>