

Delhi Crime Branch busts fake birth certificate racket

Delhi Police's Crime Branch just uncovered the tip of what appears to be a very murky iceberg.

News | Mail Today | Delhi Crime Branch busts fake birth certificate racket



Chayyanika Nigam

New Delhi

UPDATED: August 24, 2018 02:14 IST



Shops around MCD's zonal office at Civil Lines, where birth/death certificates can be obtained for Rs 1,500. (File photo)

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rs 1,500-2,000 amount the syndicate charged for each counterfeit certificate
- 500 number of birth certificates forged by the racket
- 46 fake birth certificates recovered during a raid of the shop

Delhi Police's Crime Branch just uncovered the tip of what appears to be a very murky iceberg. While three people have been arrested for selling forged birth certificates, authorities have their eyes on more than a 1,000 agencies in the city that could be printing the counterfeit documents and minting money.

The fake certificates are used to ease the way of getting admission in schools, cops said. The three people - identified as Rajeev Kumar, Anupam and Karan - had been running the racket for about three years in South-East Delhi's Tughlakabad Extension. They charged Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 for each birth certificate, later found to be fake. "It is believed that the customers were unaware that the documents were counterfeit. However, a few of the receivers have been identified and will be questioned," said an officer.

"They printed more than 500 fake birth certificates, based on which the receivers secured admission in Delhi-based schools and also used them for other purposes," another officer close to the investigation told Mail Today.

Shockingly, the school authorities did not verify the certificates submitted by the parents and the scam was unearthed only after the accused were arrested.

Asked how schools in Delhi verify birth certificates, Avdhesh Jha, principal of Government Sarvodaya Co-ed Vidyalaya in Rohini sector 8, told Mail Today: "Verification of birth certificates is usually done by civic agencies. However, our school has appointed an official, who is in charge of admissions. All the documents submitted by the parents of the child, seeking admission, are duly verified. In many cases, where the child is born in a different state, we allow them admission based on documents bearing out local address. But the birth certificate is a mandatory document, which the parents have to submit in the school," Ameeta Mulla Wattal, principal of Springdales School, Pusa Road, said, "The birth certificate is verified by the SDM (sub-divisional magistrate). It is first verified by the civic agencies. The onus of authentication of these certificates mainly lies with the government."

Experts say the development shows that schools do not have a foolproof mechanism in place to verify these documents and are largely dependent on the vigilance of government agencies. Members of the Crime Branch posed as decoy customers and approached the Tughlakabad syndicate.

"The accused accepted the money and asked us to collect the certificate after two-three days. On Monday, a police officer posing as a customer went to the shop to collect the document after making the remaining payment. A raid was conducted at the shop and two accused - Rajeev Kumar and Anupam - were apprehended with two fake birth certificates and the currency notes which were given to them by the decoy," a senior officer said.

"A search of the shop led to the recovery of 46 fake birth certificates and blank pro formas of such certificates. On verification from the MCD, the recovered documents were found to be fake. Accordingly, a case was registered under sections 420, 465, 468, 120B, 34 of the Indian Penal Code," said Rajiv Ranjan, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch).

Mail Today has a copy of the FIR according to which the accused handed over two birth certificates- one coming under the jurisdiction of North Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the other under South Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

"When both the authorities were contacted, they said those birth certificates were forged," the Additional CP said. Senior officers did not rule out the involvement of MCD workers in the racket.

Cyber experts said the official websites of the municipal corporations can be easily hacked and birth/death certificates extracted without sending any notification to the server.

In 2015, EDMC had reported a similar incident, when its website was hacked and 76 birth/death certificates were issued. YS Mann, spokesperson of North Municipal Corporation of Delhi, told Mail Today, "We put the entire process of obtaining a birth certificate online. Everything from applying to downloading and printing out a copy of the sheet, with automatic signature of the subregistrar, is now on our website. Also, we have enhanced safety features like a QR Code which is unique and cannot be tampered with. The manual process was, in fact, suspended after our format was stolen in year 2016. So nobody needs to go to the zonal offices of MCDs and delay, forging or interference of touts is also completely ruled out."

South MCD spokesperson Radha Krishnan said, "We issue birth certificates only after confirmation and certification from the concerned hospital with full details of mother, father, residential address, etc. As far as we know, these were fake certificates being printed at home and given out by some miscreants."