

# NON-OFFICIAL PERSONNEL SECURITY BRIEFING

## Regional Security Office

### U.S. Consulate General, Kolkata India

#### **Action:**

Read entire document then sign the last page and return to RSO.

**Reference:** 12 FAM 422 .2: Security Briefings and Directives

Travel.State.gov: India Country Specific Information

#### **COUNTRY DESCRIPTION:**

India, the world's largest democracy, has a very diverse population, geography, and climate. India is the world's second most populous country, and the world's seventh largest country in area.

#### **U.S. DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO INDIA DESCRIPTION:**

The U.S. Mission to India consists of a U.S. Embassy and four Consulates General. U.S. Embassy New Delhi is located in the country's capital. The Mission's four Consulates are Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad. Thirty-seven USG agencies are represented by Mission India.

#### **U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL KOLKATA, INDIA:**

The U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata is located at 5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata 700071 West Bengal, telephone 91-033-3984-2400 ; fax 91-40-2282-3865. Kolkata hours of operation are 08:30 - 17:30, Monday to Friday.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line for police in India is "100."

An additional emergency number, "112," can be accessed from mobile phones.

For ambulance service, the number is "108."

#### **KOLKATA CITY DESCRIPTION:**

Kolkata is the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal in Northeast India. Kolkata has a population of about 14 million people, making it the third most populous city in India, and the city covers an area of approximately 730 square miles, making it one of the largest metropolitan areas in India.

#### **THE RSO OFFICE:**

The Regional Security Officer (RSO) of Kolkata is a federal law enforcement officer who is the principal advisor to the CG on all security matters.

Some of the responsibilities of the RSO Office include protection of all USG personnel and property; protection of sensitive information; conducting criminal, terrorist, and personnel investigations for the State Department and other USG agencies; certain counter-intelligence activities; and liaison with the host-nation security elements on security matters and investigations.

## **CRIME:**

Kolkata is rated a MEDIUM threat post for crime by the Department of State. Visitors should be alert and cautious throughout the city. Non-violent theft is the most common problem encountered by personnel living and visiting this area. Verbal and physical harassment of women is also common in public settings.

While India is generally safe for foreign visitors; however, sexual assaults, sexual harassment and rape reports have increased dramatically in recent years. Women are cautioned not to travel alone in India. Foreign women continue to report incidents of verbal and physical sexual harassment by groups of men. Sexual harassment can occur anytime or anywhere, but most frequently happen in crowded areas such as in marketplaces, train stations, buses, and public streets. Avoid use of public transportation after dark without the company of known and trustworthy companions, restrict evening entertainment to well-known venues, and avoid isolated areas when alone at any time of day. The harassment can range from sexually suggestions or lewd comments and "catcalls," to outright groping and unwanted physical contact. Woman traveling in India are advised to respect local conservative dress and customs, as failure to do so may draw unwanted attention or harassment while in public.

Violent crime is more of an anomaly than the norm. Petty crime, especially theft of personal property, is common. Pickpockets can be very adept, and throughout the Mission, women have reported having their purse-straps cut or the bottom of their purses slit in an attempt by thieves to obtain the contents.

Theft of U.S. passports is quite common, particularly in major tourist areas. The common factor for most of the incidents has been that the victims were alone. Because U.S. citizens' purchasing power is comparatively large relative to that of the general population, travelers should always exercise modesty and caution in their financial dealings in India to reduce the chance of being a target for robbery or other serious crime.

## **TERRORISM:**

Kolkata and India in general is rated HIGH for transnational and indigenous terrorism by the Department of State. India continues to experience terrorist and insurgent activities which may affect U.S. citizens directly and/or indirectly. Anti-Western terrorist groups, some on the U.S. government's list of foreign terrorist organizations, are active in India, including Islamist extremist groups.

Past attacks in India have targeted public places, such as hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas. Although frequented by Westerners, none of these attacks appear to be targeting Westerners, western interests, or tourists.

## **DEMONSTRATIONS:**

Demonstrations/Protests/Celebrations in Kolkata are commonplace and generally non-aggressive, but the potential exists for them to turn violent. Demonstrations and general strikes, or "bandh," often cause traffic congestion or delay/closure of public transportation. Large religious ceremonies that attract hundreds of thousands of people can result in dangerous and often life-threatening stampedes. Local demonstrations can begin spontaneously and escalate with little warning, disrupting transportation systems and city services and posing risks to travelers. In response to such events, Indian authorities occasionally impose curfews and/or restrict travel. You are urged to avoid demonstrations and rallies as they have the potential for violence, especially immediately preceding and following elections and religious festivals (particularly when Hindu and Muslim festivals coincide). Tensions between castes and religious groups can also result in disruptions and violence.

Avoid demonstrations, large crowds, or substantial gatherings of people and don't attempt to drive through them. It is strongly recommended that you avoid participation in demonstrations and if you find yourself caught in the middle of one and can't get free, contact the RSO immediately.

### **TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS:**

Travel by road in Kolkata can be difficult and at times can be hazardous. India leads the world in traffic-related deaths and several U.S. citizens have suffered fatal traffic accidents in recent years. In the most recent World Health Organization (WHO) Global Status Report on Road Safety, India was granted the dubious distinction as having the worst road traffic accident rate worldwide with over 130,000 deaths annually. Road deaths increased recently in India, and the more progressive and developed states like West Bengal are the ones most affected.

Travelers should remember to keep car doors locked at all times and use seatbelts in both rear and front seats where available.

Outside major traffic areas, main roads and other roads are often poorly maintained and congested. Even primary roads frequently have only two lanes with poor visibility and inadequate warning markers. On the few divided highways local transportation commonly travels into on-coming lanes, often without lights. Heavy traffic is the norm and includes (but is not limited to) overloaded trucks and buses, scooters, pedestrians, bullock and camel carts, horses, elephants enroute to weddings, bicycles, and free-roaming livestock.

In order to drive in India, you must have either a valid Indian driver's license or a valid international driver's license. Because of difficult road and traffic conditions, and the limitations of driving licenses, RSO encourages hiring a local driver.

Exercise extreme caution when crossing streets, even in marked pedestrian areas. It is important to be alert while crossing streets and intersections, especially after dark, as traffic laws are rarely followed. On Indian roads, the safest policy is to assume that other drivers will not respond to a traffic situation the same way as in the United States. Buses and trucks often run red lights and merge directly into traffic at yield points and traffic circles.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:**

Public transportation in the form of buses, trains, and taxis are authorized at post although alternate, more secure, forms of travel are recommended. While there are many forms of public transportation in Kolkata, many are prone to safety and security problems. The train system can be dangerous due to an extremely large volume of users. City buses can be crowded and pose security problems as pickpockets are most prevalent in crowded and busy areas. Bus routes are not easily navigable. The best recommendation is to hire reliable and registered taxi's (radio taxis) and avoid traveling alone, especially at night.

Use taxis from hotels, restaurants, airports, or riding hails apps rather than hailing from the street. If you encounter threatening situations, call "100" for police assistance and then notify the RSO. Although the use of an Auto rickshaw (3-wheeled vehicle) is permitted, the RSO strongly discourages the use of this form of transportation due to the lack of safety and security the vehicle provides. Auto rickshaw drivers are also known to perpetrate crimes against passengers, especially at night and against women.

### **PERSONAL SECURITY MEASURES:**

There is no evidence to suggest that criminals specifically target American citizens -- most victims are targets of opportunity or in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, pickpockets naturally seek lucrative targets, and foreigners in general are perceived as such. Pickpockets and other petty thieves are particularly active in public markets, tourist attractions, and crowded streets. Wearing expensive jewelry, watches, and displays of large amounts of cash can draw unwanted attention. Limit the number of personal belongings you carry with you. Carry your money in your front pockets and limit the amount of credit cards or U.S. based identification that you carry on your person.

No place is 100% safe, so it is important to keep in mind that resisting or challenging an armed assailant may prompt a more violent response. Statistically, those who offer no resistance when confronted by armed assailants are usually not injured. It is highly recommended that you do not venture out alone, particularly to the less affluent parts of the city. If you wish to visit restaurants/nightspots in less frequented areas of the city, go with a group or in pairs. Furthermore, be mindful of your alcohol consumption as intoxication is often a factor in many incidents.

As with any "big city" environment, it is fundamental that all personnel take responsibility for their own actions and always remain conscious of your surroundings. Maintain a high level of self-awareness, watch for suspicious activity, vary your routes and times, and DON'T BECOME PREDICTABLE. This guidance applies whether on foot or in your vehicle.

### **HOTEL SECURITY :**

Never give out your key and keep your location, especially your hotel room number, confidential. Always make sure you use the room's door chain, deadbolt, and viewer while inside your room. Make sure you lock your valuables in the hotel safe along with important travel documents and passports. Watch for suspicious activity as you enter the hotel and your room. If you have visitors, especially ones that you have just met, have them sign in at the hotel and show their identification. Do not open hotel room doors for unidentified or unexpected visitors -- ask for identification first. Develop a plan or emergency course of action should a crisis develop such as a fire or demonstration in/around your hotel. Be aware that it is likely

that criminals are drawn to hotel areas due to the large number of foreign tourists whom they view as affluent and easy targets.

### **CONSULATE ACCESS / PROCEDURAL SECURITY:**

All un-cleared (foreign nationals or no USG clearance) visitors, or non-USG employees, must be screened and escorted at all times. Blue and Yellow badge holders are authorized to escort a maximum of five un-cleared visitors at one time. All visitors must be screened and processed by Embassy security personnel prior to access being permitted.

### **HEALTH CONCERNS:**

Kolkata does have health concerns. One should take normal precautions regarding drinking tap water and eating fruits, vegetables, and salads. Individuals may also react adversely to increased levels of pollution. Short-term TDY travelers to Kolkata carry an additional risk because of the lack of time to acclimatize and may require some time to adjust to the food, dehydration, and sleep patterns which all can adversely affect blood pressure, digestion, stress and energy levels.

Outbreaks of mosquito-borne viral diseases such as Dengue fever occur in various parts of Kolkata each year. Outbreaks of Avian Influenza (H5N1 virus) occur intermittently in eastern India. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in India.

The quality of medical care in India varies considerably, Kolkata is no different. Despite reports of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in hospitals, in general travelers should not delay or avoid treatment for urgent or emergent medical situations. Contact the Consulate immediately if you have any health concerns.

## **EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

For any kind of security related problem or emergency contact your office supervisor, sponsor, or the RSO. Always be proactive in contacting your supervisor if there is a city crisis or incident.

1. Consulate Operator: 033-3984-2400 Option "O"
2. Regional Security Officer: +91-90077-30031 (cell); during business hours, you can contact the RSO office directly at 033-3984-2472 (from mobile) 3984-2472 (from a landline)
3. Assistant Regional Security Officer -Investigator: +91-62908-21095 (cell)
4. Lead FSNI: +91-99039-87615
5. Kolkata Police Emergency : 100
6. Fire Department: 101
7. Ambulance: 108

## **DIALING INSTRUCTION FOR KOLKATA:**

Calling from Kolkata Cell Phone to Kolkata Cell Phone: +91 XXXXX - XXXXX

(Dial +91 or just dial the 10 digit mobile number)

Calling from Kolkata Cell Phone to Kolkata Landline Phone: 033 XXXX - XXXXX

Calling from Kolkata Landline to Kolkata Cell Phone: XXXXX - XXXXX

(Dial 10 digit mobile numbers)

Calling from US Cell in Kolkata to Kolkata Cell Phone: + 91 XXXXX -XXXXX

Calling from US Cell in Kolkata to Kolkata Landline Phone: +91-33-XXXX - XXXX

Calling from US Cell to US cell in Kolkata: +1- (area code)-XXX - XXXX

Calling from U.S. to Kolkata Landline Phone: 011-91-33-XXXX - XXXX

Calling from U.S. to Kolkata Cell Phone: 011-91- XXXXX -XXXXX

# NON-OFFICIAL PERSONNEL SECURITY BRIEFING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

## Regional Security Office U.S. Consulate General, Kolkata India

The Diplomatic Security Service and the U.S. Consulate General Kolkata have established a policy of providing security awareness briefings. In accordance with this policy, sign and scan ONLY this page to the RSO Kolkata office (RSOKolkata@state.gov) prior to your arrival into the consular district.

I (signee) acknowledge that I have read the briefing on the date indicated below at which the following topics were covered:

- RSO Duties and Responsibilities
- Crime
- Terrorism
- Demonstrations
- Traffic Safety
- Public Transportation
- Personal Security Measures
- Hotel Security
- Consulate Access
- Health Concerns
- Dialing Instructions
- Emergency Phone Numbers
- Contact Responsibilities during an Incident/Crisis

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Printed Name

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Date

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Signature