Financial Security; Fraud; Drug Trafficking; Murder; Rape/Sexual Violence; Theft; Stolen items; Burglary; Transportation Security; Other; Religious Violence; Earthquakes; Floods; Counterfeiting; Travel Health and Safety

South Central Asia > Bangladesh > Dhaka

2/18/2013

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Financial scams, vehicle thefts, and petty drug crimes comprise the majority of criminal activity in major cities. Most crime tends to be easily avoidable by exercising caution and common sense. There have been no indications that foreigners have been, or are being, specifically targeted for crime because of their nationality.

Homicides, sexual assaults, personal robberies, and residential break-ins occur with regular frequency but do not exceed average levels of major cities in the United States. Violent crime tends to be situational with the perpetrators having some level of familiarity with the victims as opposed to random violent criminal acts. Many news stories reporting violent crimes indicate circumstances under which potential victims may have had an opportunity ahead of time to alter patterns of behavior and respond to environmental factors, which placed them at risk.

Overall Road Safety Situation

Road conditions and quality varies throughout Bangladesh. Most roads are generally passable. Roads tend to be thoroughfares for many users other than automobiles such as pedestrians, farm animals, rickshaws, bicyclists, motorcycles, scooters, and delivery carts. Motorists need to be able to navigate roads safely while sharing them with a variety of users as well as pay attention to road quality, which can range from good to poor in both major cities and rural areas.

Night-time driving outside of urban areas is characterized by low visibility due to the lack of effective roadside lighting. Fog can be a barrier to visibility, and drivers are at risk of not being able to detect pedestrians and animals that frequently walk along roads at night. The lack of reflective clothing and signage can leave a driver little or no time to react to low-visibility objects.
Drivers should exercise extra caution with regard to speed. Vehicular accidents at high speeds are often fatal. Many occupants of vehicles do not utilize seat belts, and drivers tend to travel at excessive speeds when the opportunity presents itself. Scenes of vehicular accidents can become violent as bystanders or otherwise related parties may take sides with regard to fault. Violent confrontations, which can be fatal, can ensue.

Vehicle theft and break-ins occur. Keeping valuable items out of plain view in an unoccupied vehicle also reduces the enticement to break in by would-be criminals. Cargo is at risk if left unattended and unsecured.

There is very little enforcement of traffic laws; this leads to daily traffic jams and overall gridlock in urban areas. It is not uncommon to see vehicles traveling the wrong way on a street or commuters hanging out of buses.

Use of road-based public transportation such as taxis rickshaws, natural gas mini-cars, and buses can be hazardous. Safety standards for these modes of transportation are not well enforced, and they can also serve as targets of crime.

Domestic airlines tend to fly reliably. Most domestic flights are very short in duration, so exposure to any unknown safety hazards would be brief.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

**Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns**

Bangladesh has seen some instances of extremist rhetoric over the last year but no specifically identifiable operations by extremist groups.

**Civil Unrest**

There were a number of protests regarding September’s YouTube video about the prophet Mohammad; however, local authorities were extremely proactive and kept violence to a minimum. There was no known specific targeting of U.S.-based businesses although business did experience occasional disruptions to operations due to protests and other civil actions.

Political passions continue to be the primary source of civil unrest with the “hartal,” or general strike, being utilized as the favorite tool by political factions to bring attention to issues they feel are important. The enforcement of the strikes has led to violence and property damage. Most notable, a U.S. Embassy vehicle was attacked and seriously damaged by hartal
supporters in December 2012. None of the occupants of the vehicle were injured seriously, and the political party responsible paid for the damage to the vehicle.

Religious or Ethnic Violence

The town of Ramu near Cox’s Bazar experienced religious violence between Muslims and Buddhists over what is now known to be a fake Facebook post disparaging the prophet Mohammad. The page allegedly belonged to a Buddhist student; however, subsequent investigation revealed that two Muslim students fabricated the posting in order to incite violence. Overall, religious tensions tend to be sporadic in nature and not newly identifiable trends.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

A wide number of experts see Bangladesh, particularly Dhaka, as one of the most seismically vulnerable regions in the world.

Widespread flooding is a constant threat with substantial flood events and damage occurring in previous years.

The government is proactive in addressing these issues but still has work to do in terms of creating the proper infrastructure and material resources to deal with large-scale catastrophes. Recent cooperation and coordination with other governments and organizations to respond to emergencies has been good, and in October 2012, a large-scale government-wide disaster preparedness exercise was conducted out of which came a number of areas to be enhanced in order to facilitate optimal emergency preparedness.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Industrial accidents are an issue with the most prominent incident occurring in November 2012. Multinational businesses, which import ready-made garments from Bangladesh, have been actively involved in addressing worker safety issues and certifying manufacturers for compliance in health and safety standards.

Vehicle transportation accidents are common and represent an ever-present threat to business goods as they are moved throughout the country.
Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Counterfeit movies and goods are available; however, the overall low level of disposable income does not generate a high demand. Many garment factories wholesale factory seconds to local outlets that sell them at a reduced price since they cannot be exported.

Privacy Concerns

Unauthorized access to personally identifiable information (PII) is quite possible. Few holders of the information have adequate safeguards and access controls to prevent dissemination of sensitive personal information. Official intrusions into personal privacy are not well documented.

Regional Travel Concerns and Restricted Travel Areas/Zones

The government continues to be sensitive to travel in the Chittagong Hills Tracts area located in the east near Burma. Difficult land use and ethnic issues persist between the government and indigenous persons who live in this area. Regional travel is not difficult to facilitate provided all necessary documents and permissions are in place prior to travel.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crimes occur but are not well documented. If petty crimes are reported, police may or may not detect a drug nexus. While illicit drug use is occurring, the knowledge of its frequency, type, and proliferation of use remains based mostly on anecdotal evidence.

Kidnapping Threats

Targeted kidnappings and kidnapping plots represent a small amount of the overall crime environment. Local businessmen, known criminals, and some politicians have been targeted. Kidnappers tend to be highly unprofessional and dangerous and most likely gather information on the victim through inside sources.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment
American Citizen Services – Dial 88 02 885-5500, ask the operator to connect you to the duty officer.
Gulshan - +88 02 989-5826.
Badda - +88 02 988-2652.
Foreigner’s help line +88 01713-398355.

Various Police/Security Agencies

The Bangladesh police are the primary law enforcement entity. They have metropolitan and rural stations. The police have several branches to include Special Branch, Detective Branch, Criminal Investigation Division, SWAT, and Forensics. The general purpose is enforcement of national and local legal codes.

Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

Apollo Hospital, Plot: 81, Block: E, Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka 1229, Bangladesh (+88 02) 840-1661, 840-1680 & 840-1600 01911 555 555 (emergency) 01714 090 000 (ambulance).

United Hospital, Plot 15 Road No 71, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh (+88 02) 883-6000 & 883-6444 01914001234 (emergency) 01914001234, 01914001326 (ambulance)

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

International SOS based in Singapore. +65 6338 7800.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance


Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Crimes/Scams

All business travelers should exercise caution with investment schemes or property transactions.
Areas to be Avoided and Best Security Practices

Business travelers should exercise caution in all areas of Dhaka. Increase vigilance in hours of darkness and avoid moving around alone. Avoid developing routines and unnecessary disclosure of travel details such as lodging location and length of stay. Establish reliable local contacts prior to travel.

Drivers must be vigilant, aware, and patient. Theft from and of vehicles can be avoided by installing an alarm system, which will not allow the vehicle to be operated if activated. Cargo theft risks can be mitigated by utilizing closed, locked containers in which to transport goods.

Vetting of personnel and proper personal security procedures remains key to avoiding kidnapping.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Location and Contact Information

Embassy/Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located on Madani Avenue in Baridhara near the intersection of Park Road and Madani Avenue. Business hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Sunday through Thursday.

Embassy/Consulate Contact Numbers

RSO - +88 02 885-5500 (ask operator to connect)
Embassy/Consulate Operator - +88 02 885-5500
Marine Post One +88 02 885-5500 ext. 2252

Review country-specific information at the U.S. Department of State’s travel.state.gov website. Additional country-specific information may be obtained at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1011.html.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy has an active OSAC Country Council. Point of Contact is RSO Bernard Nixon +88 02 885-5500 ext. 2165.