



Bangladesh 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Fraud; Drug Trafficking; Murder; Rape/Sexual Violence; Burglary; Cargo Security; Religious Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Religious Violence; Cyber; Earthquakes; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Hate Crimes; Kidnapping

South Central Asia > Bangladesh; South Central Asia > Bangladesh > Dhaka

3/15/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Financial scams, vehicle thefts, and petty drug crimes comprise the majority of criminal activity in Dhaka and other major cities in Bangladesh. There is no indication that foreigners have been or are being targeted because of their nationality.

Homicides, sexual assaults, robberies, and residential break-ins occur with regular frequency but do not exceed average levels of major cities in the U.S. Violent crime tends to be situational with the perpetrators having some level of familiarity with the victims (as opposed to random violent criminal acts).

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Vehicle theft and break-ins occur.

Cargo is at risk if left unattended and unsecured.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cybersecurity intrusions and credit/debit card fraud is not unusually high.

Other Areas of Concern

The government continues to be sensitive to travel in the Chittagong Hills Tracts area in the east. Difficult land use and ethnic issues persist between the government and indigenous persons. If you travel in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, you must register with local authorities and you should exercise extreme caution.

Regional travel is not difficult to facilitate provided all necessary documents and permissions are in place prior to travel.

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Although U.S. government officials in Bangladesh continue to conduct official business without incident, the Embassy has imposed strict restrictions on personnel movement. U.S. government officials and their families are not permitted to be in many public places and are also prohibited from traveling on foot, motorcycle, bicycle, rickshaw, or other uncovered means on all public thoroughfares and sidewalks. They are also restricted from attending large gatherings in Bangladesh, including events at international hotels. The Embassy encourages U.S. citizens to adopt similar security measures.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions and quality varies throughout Bangladesh. Most roads are generally passable; however, drivers should exercise extra caution regarding speed. Roads tend to have many users: pedestrians, farm animals, rickshaws, bicyclists, motorcycles, scooters, and delivery carts. Motorists need to be able to navigate roads safely with these users while paying attention to road quality, which can range from good to poor.

There is very little enforcement of traffic laws, which leads to daily traffic jams and overall gridlock in urban areas. Drivers must be vigilant, aware, and patient. It is not uncommon to see vehicles traveling the wrong way or commuters hanging out of buses.

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Night-time driving outside of urban areas is characterized by low visibility due to the lack of roadside lighting. Fog can be a barrier to visibility, and drivers are at risk of not being able to detect pedestrians and animals at night. The lack of reflective clothing and signage can leave a driver little/no time to react.

Vehicular accidents are often fatal at high speeds. Many occupants of vehicles do not utilize seat belts, and drivers tend to travel at excessive speeds. Scenes of vehicular accidents can become violent, even fatal, as bystanders or related parties may take sides with regard to fault. Vehicle transportation accidents represent an ever-present threat to business goods as they are moved throughout the country.

Public Transportation Conditions

Use of public transportation (buses, taxis, rickshaws, motorized rickshaws (known as "CNGs") can be hazardous. Safety standards are not well enforced, and passengers alone in taxis and rickshaws are often targets of crime.

The railway and river ferry are two other forms of public transportation commonly used by Bangladeshis. The railway system is often overcrowded with Bangladeshis frequently overcrowding the cars and/or riding on top of the train. The railway lines are occasionally targeted for sabotage and derailment during political unrest as a means of enforcing "hartals" (general nationwide strikes). Water ferries and boats are also often overcrowded and do not necessarily have sufficient/any safety standards. There have been several reports of ferries sinking due to weather, overcrowding, and/or unsafe conditions.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Arriving and departing the International Airport in Dhaka can be chaotic and intimidating for the less-seasoned traveler. Long lines at immigration and delays in getting luggage are common. The RSO recommends that travelers decline help from anyone offering assistance unless that assistance has been pre-arranged and coordinated (by the traveler's company or a travel expeditor). The RSO also recommends that travelers pre-arrange transportation from the airport from their hotel or company.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Bangladesh's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the FAA's safety assessment page.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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Some elements within Bangladeshi groups may have also associated themselves with transnational terrorist groups (al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIL/Da'esh)).

The Department of State alerts U.S. citizens to concerns about the ongoing potential for extremist violence in Bangladesh. U.S. citizens who travel to Bangladesh are urged to exercise appropriate caution and maintain a high level of vigilance in light of recent violent attacks. Although thousands of U.S. citizens visit each year without incident, U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to Bangladesh are urged to exercise caution while in the country. The U.S. government assesses that the terrorist threat remains real and credible, and further attacks are possible.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Anti-Western terrorist groups, some on the U.S. government's list of foreign terrorist organizations, are active in Bangladesh, including: Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B), Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, Ansar al-Islam, and Ansarullah Bangla Team.

Americans have not been specifically targeted for terrorist activity because they are Americans, but there is a current terrorist threat of attack against Westerners in Bangladesh. On September 28, 2015, and in subsequent messages, the U.S. Embassy warned that a terrorist attack could occur against Westerners in Bangladesh, including attacks against large gatherings of foreigners at international hotels. There have been public claims of responsibility by ISIL for the September 28 killing of an Italian national, the October 3 killing of a Japanese national, and the October 24 bombing of a Shia Muslim religious procession.

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Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy.

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Political parties and other organizations frequently organize general strikes (called hartals) to disrupt or shut down services.

Demonstrations sometimes lead to violent clashes resulting in injuries, deaths, property damage, blocked highways, and sabotaged trains/railways. Participants throw rocks, debris, and small homemade explosive devices. Security forces use tear gas and other crowd control measures against demonstrators, including firearms with rubber bullets.

In times of demonstrations, national strikes, or elections, avoid Road 86 in the Gulshan-2 area of Dhaka, as one of the major national political party's headquarters is located there. Take particular precaution against exposed movement during hours of darkness in the vicinity of

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Gulshan-2 Circle (DIT-2). Avoid Naya Paltan area in Dhaka, Baitul Mukarram Mosque (National Mosque), Muktangan (bordered by Baitul Mukarram Mosque to the east, the General Post Office (GPO) to the south, the Secretariat to the West, and Topkhana Road to the North), and Topkhana-Motijheel Road because political rallies can occur at these locations. Avoid all demonstrations or political gatherings.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

The majority of the population follows Islam. Recent extremist attacks on secular writers, religious minorities, and foreigners are a worrying development at odds with the country's history of moderation and tolerance. Religious or ethnic violence has been directed toward minority groups, including Hindus and Buddhists. Also, in 2015, extremist groups attacked secular bloggers, murdering four, including a U.S. citizen, in separate incidents.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Bangladesh, particularly Dhaka, is one of the most seismically vulnerable regions in the world.

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

The government is proactive in addressing these issues but has work to do in terms of creating the proper infrastructure and material resources to deal with large-scale catastrophes.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Industrial accidents are an issue, with the most prominent incident occurring in April 2013, when a building housing commercial and manufacturing operations collapsed, killing over 1,400 people. International buyers of ready-made garments have been collaborating with the government to address worker safety issues and to certify manufacturers for compliance with building and fire safety standards.

Personnel-Background

Although homosexuality is illegal, arrests for these offenses are rare and usually only made after a complaint is filed by a third party. Open displays of homosexual relationships will be met with public disapproval.

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Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crimes do not often affect those not involved in illegal activity, but punishments can be harsh for those involved in the use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs. “Yaba” is an illegal methamphetamine, and visitors should avoid purchase of this or any other illegal drugs.

Kidnapping Threat

U.S. citizens are advised against traveling to the Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban Hill Tracts districts (collectively known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts) due to kidnappings and other security incidents.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If harassed or detained by the local police authorities, contact the U.S. Embassy, Dhaka (Tel: +88 02 5566-2000) and ask the operator to connect you to American Citizen Services.

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Crime Victim Assistance

Local police telephone numbers:

Gulshan - +88 02 989-5826

Vatara - +88 02 989-7438

Badda - +88 02 988-2652

Foreigner's help line +88 01841 774968

Victims of crime can also seek information and assistance from the "National Helpline Centre for Violence against Women and Children," which offers a toll-free, 24-hour/day, 7-day/week number: 10921. Call center staff are trained to provide information on local victim's assistance resources, including hospitals, shelters, and police contacts, in both Bangla and English. Information provided is confidential. The website for the National Helpline is: www.mspvaw.org.bd. Their email address is: nhcvawc@yahoo.com.

The Bangladesh Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs also supports "One-stop Crisis Centers (OCC)" located at eight division and large city hospitals and 60 crisis "cells" located at smaller clinics. Services provided at OCC facilities include medical treatment, counseling, and legal advice and are provided free of charge.

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Police/Security Agencies

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

Medical Emergencies

Local medical services may not meet Western standards.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Apollo Hospital: Plot: 81, Block: E, Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka 1229, Bangladesh; Central PABX: +88 02 841661-5; Ambulance: +88 01714 090000; Emergency Hotline: 10678; Appointment Center: +88 02 884-5242, +88 01729-276556, +88 01195-276556

United Hospital: Plot 15 Road No 71, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh; Hotline: 10666; Ambulance: +88 02 883-6000 Ext. 8066; Emergency: +88 01914-001234, +88 02 883-6000 Ext. 8066; Appointment Center: +88 02 883-6000

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Available Air Ambulance Services

International SOS based in Singapore: +65 6338 7800

Recommended Insurance Posture

It is recommended that travelers have some form of medical/evacuation insurance in place prior to arrival or have a plan in case there is a medical emergency.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/bangladesh?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy has an active OSAC Country Council. The Point of Contact is ARSO Wil Vaughn +88 02 5566 2000. To reach OSAC's South and Central Asia team, please email

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OSACSCA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy Dhaka is located at Madani Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh 1212

Open: Sun-Thurs, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy: +88 02 5566-2000

In an emergency, press "0" and ask for the duty officer.

Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

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Review country-specific information at the U.S. Department of State's travel.state.gov website where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for Bangladesh (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1011.html). For additional information, refer to our Travelers Checklist.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Bangladesh enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at step.state.gov. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. Embassy or Cconsulate to contact you in an emergency. If you do not have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Business travelers should exercise caution with investment schemes or property transactions.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

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Many news stories reporting violent crimes indicate circumstances under which victims may have had an opportunity to alter patterns of behavior and respond to environmental factors that placed them at risk. Travelers should exercise caution in all areas of Dhaka. Most crime tends to be easily avoidable by exercising caution and common sense. Increase vigilance in hours of darkness and avoid moving around alone. Avoid developing routines and unnecessary disclosure travel details (lodging location, length of stay). Establish reliable local contacts prior to travel. U.S. citizens should take precautions, remain vigilant about their personal security, and be alert to local security developments.

Cargo theft can be mitigated by utilizing closed, locked containers to transport goods.

Vetting of personnel and proper personal security procedures remain keys to avoiding kidnapping.

Using caution when online and closely monitoring credit card activity is recommended. Computer and mobile software and apps should be updated to defend against malware, and all devices should be kept locked when not in use. Strong PINs and passwords are advised. Disabling autoconnect, remote connectivity, and Bluetooth will prevent inadvertent connection to unsafe networks. Online shopping, banking, proprietary business work or other sensitive activities should not be done on unsecured or public wireless networks (found at airports, restaurants, and cafes). Publicly accessible computers (in hotel business centers, libraries, and cyber cafes) should also be avoided.

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