

ARE YOU PLANNING TO TRAVEL TO INDIA?
YOU MAY WANT TO HAVE A SECOND THOUGHT

The Government of the United States of America is warning its citizens of the dangers of travelling to India.

In a 'Travel Alert', the US State Department has said that it has '*continuing concerns in India*' and that the '*U.S. Government continues to receive information that terrorist groups may be planning to attack India ...*'.

In an interview with Mr C. Kannan, who said that he was Head of the Information Section of the Consulate General of India at the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), **TARGET** () was told that '*travelling to India is always safe ...*'.

Pooh-poohing the US Government's Travel Alert, Mr C. Kannan explained:

'It is safe to travel to India ... Many countries put out travel warnings, but India is, always, safe ... Tourists should only visit the "proper" places ... Stick to tourist places (in order to be safe) ... Don't travel at night ... Don't visit remote areas because they are not safe ...'.

Mr C. Kannan said, in effect, that the US Government was wrong in publishing its Travel Alert.

Mrs Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, visited India and stayed in Mumbai, Mr C. Kannan said.

'Do you think she would visit Mumbai if it was not safe?' he asked, rhetorically.

The reference to Mumbai was in respect of the November 26-29, 2008, attack by 10 male terrorists, an attack that cost the lives of 173 innocent people and wounded another 308 people.

It has, now, been confirmed that the attack on India's largest city was carried out by Islamic terrorists from Pakistan.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stayed at The Taj Mahal Palace and Tower, one of the hotels, singled out by members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan-based, Islamic militant organisation, for attack on November 28, 2009.

Mr C. Kannan again:

'When terrorists attacked New York, did it mean that the United States was unsafe? Do you think that my government would allow Mrs Clinton to stay (at The Taj Mahal Palace and Tower) if it was not safe?'

He, then, went on to say that he and the Indian Government did not know from where the terrorists came in the November 2008 attack on Mumbai.

The US Government, however, takes a slightly different view of the situation in India, today, compared to that of Mr C. Kannan.

In its Travel Alert of December 28, 2009, it is stated:

'Terrorists (operating in India) and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans or Westerners are known to congregate or visit ...

'The November 2008 attacks on Mumbai provided a vivid reminder that hotels and other public places are especially attractive targets for terrorist groups...

'Americans are advised to monitor local news reports and consider the level of security present when visiting public places, including religious sites, or choosing hotels, restaurants, entertainment and recreation venues ...

'There is also the possibility of violence in the south-central Indian state of Andhra Pradesh as civil unrest continues ...

'U.S. citizens resident or traveling in Andhra Pradesh during this period are reminded to maintain a high level of security awareness at all times and avoid political rallies, demonstrations, and large crowds of any kind ...'.

At least 166 victims (civilians and security personnel) and 9 attackers were killed in the attacks on Mumbai in November of 2008.

Among the dead were 28 foreign nationals from 10 countries.

One attacker was captured; the others were killed.

The bodies of many of the dead hostages showed signs of torture or disfigurement.

A number of those killed were notable figures in business, media, and security services.

Since 1993, there have been not less than 6 major terrorist attacks in India.

These attacks cost the lives of not less than 526 innocent people and wounded not less than 1,705 people.

So, is India to be considered a safe destination for tourism?

Where are you going for the week of February 14 through to February 19, during the Chinese New Year festivities?

-- **E N D** --

***While TARGET makes every attempt to ensure accuracy of all data published,
TARGET cannot be held responsible for any errors and/or omissions.***

*If readers feel that they would like to voice their opinions about that which they have read in **TARGET**, please feel free to e-mail your views to editor@targetnewspapers.com. **TARGET** does not guarantee to publish readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the laws of libel.*