

Questions and Answers About Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) and Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus

Avian Influenza

How is avian influenza detected in humans?

Avian influenza cannot be diagnosed by symptoms alone, so a laboratory test is required. Avian influenza is usually diagnosed by collecting a swab from the nose or throat during the first few days of illness. This swab is then sent to a laboratory, where they will either look for avian influenza virus using a molecular test, or they will try to grow the virus. Growing avian influenza viruses should only be done in laboratories with high levels of protection. If it is late in the illness, it may be difficult to find an avian influenza virus directly using these methods. If this is the case, it may still be possible to diagnose avian influenza by looking for evidence of the body's response to the virus. This is not always an option because it requires two blood specimens (one taken during the first few days of illness and another taken some weeks later), and it can take several weeks to verify the results.

What are the implications of avian influenza to human health?

Two main risks for human health from avian influenza are 1) the risk of direct infection when the virus passes from the infected bird to humans, sometimes resulting in severe disease; and 2) the risk that the virus – if given enough opportunities – will change into a form that is highly infectious for humans and spreads easily from person to person.

How is avian influenza in humans treated?

Studies done in laboratories suggest that the prescription medicines approved for human influenza viruses should work in treating avian influenza infection in humans. However, influenza viruses can become resistant to these drugs, so these medications may not always work. Additional studies are needed to determine the effectiveness of these medicines.

Does seasonal influenza vaccine protect against avian influenza infection in people?

No. Seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against avian influenza.

Should I wear a surgical mask to prevent exposure to avian influenza?

Currently, wearing a mask is not recommended for routine use (e.g., in public) for preventing influenza exposure. In the United States, disposable surgical and procedure masks have been widely used in health-care settings to prevent exposure to respiratory infections, but the masks have not been used commonly in community settings, such as schools, businesses, and public gatherings.

Can I get avian influenza from eating or preparing poultry or eggs?

You cannot get avian influenza from properly handled and cooked poultry and eggs.

There currently is no scientific evidence that people have been infected with bird flu by eating safely handled and properly cooked poultry or eggs.

Most cases of avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from direct or close contact with infected poultry or surfaces contaminated with secretions and excretions from infected birds. Even if poultry and eggs were to be contaminated with the virus, proper cooking would kill it. In fact, recent studies have shown that the cooking methods that are already recommended by the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for poultry and eggs to prevent other infections will destroy influenza viruses as well.

So to stay safe, the advice is the same for protecting against any infection from poultry:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw poultry and eggs.
- Clean cutting boards and other utensils with soap and hot water to keep raw poultry from contaminating other foods.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure you cook poultry to a temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Consumers may wish to cook poultry to a higher temperature for personal preference.
- Cook eggs until whites and yolks are firm.

The U.S. government carefully controls domestic and imported food products, and in 2004 issued a ban on importation of poultry from countries affected by avian influenza viruses, including the H5N1 strain. This ban still is in place. For more information, see [Embargo of Birds from Specified Countries](#).

We have a small flock of chickens. Is it safe to keep them?

Yes. In the United States there is no need at present to remove a flock of chickens because of concerns regarding avian influenza. The U.S. Department of Agriculture monitors potential infection of poultry and poultry products by avian influenza viruses and other infectious disease agents.

For additional information about avian influenza visit pandemicflu.gov.

Avian Influenza A (H5N1)

What is the avian influenza A (H5N1) virus that has been reported in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Near East?

Influenza A (H5N1) virus – also called “H5N1 virus” – is an influenza A virus subtype that occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious among birds, and can be deadly to them.

Outbreaks of avian influenza H5N1 occurred among poultry in eight countries in Asia (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam) during late 2003 and early 2004. At that time, more than 100 million birds in the affected countries either died from the disease or were killed in order to try to control the outbreaks. By March 2004, the outbreak was reported to be under control.

Beginning in June 2004, however, new outbreaks of influenza H5N1 among poultry and wild birds were reported in Asia. Since that time, the virus has spread geographically. Reports of H5N1 infection in wild birds in Europe began in mid-2005. In early 2006, influenza A H5N1 infection in wild birds and poultry were reported in Africa and the Near East.

Human cases of influenza A (H5N1) infection have been reported in Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. For the most current information about avian influenza and cumulative case numbers, see the [World Health Organization Avian Influenza website](#).

What are the risks to humans from the current H5N1 outbreak?

H5N1 virus does not usually infect people, but more than 200 human cases have been reported. Most of these cases have occurred from direct or close contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces; however, a few cases of human-to-human spread of H5N1 virus have occurred.

So far, spread of H5N1 virus from person to person has been rare, limited and unsustainable. Nonetheless, because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that H5N1 virus one day could be able to infect humans and spread easily from one person to another. Because these viruses do not commonly infect humans, there is little or no immune protection against them in the human population.

If H5N1 virus were to gain the capacity to spread easily from person to person, an [influenza pandemic](#) (worldwide outbreak of disease) could begin. No one can predict when a pandemic might occur. However, experts from around the world are watching the H5N1 situation in Asia and Europe very closely and are preparing for the possibility that the virus may begin to spread more easily from person to person.

How is infection with H5N1 virus in humans treated?

Most H5N1 viruses that have caused human illness and death appear to be resistant to amantadine and rimantadine, two antiviral medications commonly used for treatment of patients with influenza. Two other antiviral medications, oseltamivir and zanamivir, would probably work to treat influenza caused by H5N1 virus, but additional studies are needed to demonstrate their current and ongoing effectiveness.

Is there a vaccine to protect people from some strains of the H5N1 virus?

Yes. On April 17, 2007, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced its approval of the first vaccine to prevent human infection with one strain of the avian influenza (bird flu) H5N1 virus. The vaccine, produced by sanofi pasteur, Inc., has been purchased by the federal government for the U.S. Strategic National Stockpile; it will be distributed by public-health officials if needed. This vaccine will not be made commercially available to the general public. Other H5N1 vaccines are being developed by other companies against different H5N1 strains. For more information about the sanofi pasteur, Inc. vaccine, visit <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2007/NEW01611.html>. For information about other H5N1 and pandemic flu vaccine research activities visit <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/research/index.html#vresearch>.

What is the benefit of the FDA-approved H5N1 vaccine produced by sanofi pasteur Inc?

The H5N1 vaccine approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on April 17, 2007, was developed as a safeguard against the possible emergence of an H5N1 pandemic virus. However, since the H5N1 virus is not a pandemic virus since it does not transmit efficiently from person to person, the H5N1 vaccine is being held in stockpiles rather than being used by the general public. This vaccine aids H5N1 preparedness efforts in case an H5N1 pandemic virus were to emerge.

What does CDC recommend regarding H5N1 virus?

In February 2004, CDC provided U.S. public health departments with recommendations for enhanced surveillance (“detection”) of H5N1 influenza in the country. Follow-up messages, distributed via the Health Alert Network, were sent to the health departments on August 12, 2004, February 4, 2005, and June 7, 2006; all three notices reminded public health departments about

recommendations for detecting (domestic surveillance), diagnosing, and preventing the spread of H5N1 virus. The notices also recommended measures for laboratory testing for H5N1 virus. To read these notices, visit [Health Updates on Avian Influenza](#).

Does CDC recommend travel restrictions to areas with known H5N1 outbreaks?

CDC does not recommend any travel restrictions to affected countries at this time. However, CDC currently advises that travelers to countries with known outbreaks of H5N1 influenza avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. For more information, visit [Travelers' Health](#).

Is there a risk in handling feather products that come from countries experiencing outbreaks of avian influenza A (H5N1)?

The U.S. government has determined that there is a risk to handling feather products from countries experiencing outbreaks of H5N1 influenza.

There is currently a ban on the importation of birds and bird products from H5N1-affected countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The [regulation](#) states that no person may import or attempt to import any birds (Class Aves), whether dead or alive, or any products derived from birds (including hatching eggs), from the specified countries (see [Embargo of Birds from Specified Countries](#)). This prohibition does not apply to any person who imports or attempts to import products derived from birds if, as determined by federal officials, such products have been properly processed to render them noninfectious so that they pose no risk of transmitting or carrying H5N1 and which comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements. Therefore, feathers from these countries are banned unless they have been processed to render them noninfectious. Additional information about the import ban is available on the USDA website.

Is there a risk to importing pet birds that come from countries experiencing outbreaks of avian influenza A (H5N1)?

The U.S. government has determined that there is a risk to importing pet birds from countries experiencing outbreaks of H5N1 influenza. CDC and USDA have both taken action to ban the importation of birds from areas where H5N1 has been documented. There is currently a ban on the importation of birds and bird products from H5N1-affected countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The regulation states that no person may import or attempt to import any birds (Class Aves), whether dead or alive, or any products derived from birds (including hatching eggs), from the specified countries (see [Embargo of Birds from Specified Countries](#)).

Can a person become infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus by cleaning a bird feeder?

There is no evidence of H5N1 having caused disease in birds or people in the United States. At the present time, there is no risk of becoming infected with H5N1 virus from bird feeders. Generally, perching birds (Passeriformes) are the predominate type of birds at feeders. While there are documented cases of H5N1 causing death in some Passeriformes (e.g., house sparrow, Eurasian tree-sparrow, house finch), in both free-ranging and experimental settings, none occurred in the U.S. and most of the wild birds that are traditionally associated with avian influenza viruses are waterfowl and shore birds.

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness

What changes are needed for H5N1 or another avian influenza virus to cause a pandemic?

Three conditions must be met for a pandemic to start: 1) a new influenza virus subtype must emerge for which there is little or no human immunity; 2) it must infect humans and causes illness; and 3) it must spread easily and sustainably (continue without interruption) among humans. The H5N1 virus in Asia and Europe meets the first two conditions: it is a new virus for humans (H5N1 viruses have never circulated widely among people), and it has infected more than 190 humans, killing over half of them.

However, the third condition, the establishment of efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission of the virus, has not occurred. For this to take place, the H5N1 virus would need to improve its transmissibility among humans. This could occur either by “reassortment” or adaptive mutation.

Reassortment occurs when genetic material is exchanged between human and avian viruses during co-infection (infection with both viruses at the same time) of a human or another mammal. The result could be a fully transmissible pandemic virus—that is, a virus that can spread easily and directly between humans. A more gradual process is adaptive mutation, where the capability of a virus to bind to human cells increases during infections of humans.

What is CDC doing to prepare for a possible H5N1 influenza pandemic?

CDC is taking part in a number of pandemic prevention and preparedness activities, including the following:

- Providing leadership to the National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Task Force, created in May 2005 by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Working with the Association of Public Health Laboratories on training workshops for state laboratories on the use of special laboratory (molecular) techniques to identify H5 viruses.
- Working with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and others to help states with their pandemic planning efforts.
- Working with other agencies, such as the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration, on antiviral stockpile issues.
- Working with the World Health Organization (WHO) to investigate influenza H5N1 among people (e.g., in Vietnam) and to provide help in laboratory diagnostics and training to local authorities.
- Performing laboratory testing of H5N1 viruses.
- Starting a \$5.5 million initiative to improve influenza surveillance in Asia.
- Holding or taking part in training sessions to improve local capacities to conduct surveillance for possible human cases of H5N1 and to detect influenza A H5 viruses by using laboratory techniques.
- Developing and distributing reagent kits to detect the currently circulating influenza A H5N1 viruses.
- CDC has developed and is distributing the first FDA approved test for the detection of the H5 viruses that first emerged in Asia in 2003.

CDC also is working closely with WHO and the National Institutes of Health on safety testing of vaccine candidates and development of additional vaccine virus seed candidates for influenza A (H5N1) and other subtypes of influenza A viruses.

Avian Influenza Infection in Animals

What animals can be infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses?

In addition to humans and birds, we know that pigs, tigers, leopards, ferrets, and domestic cats can be infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses. In addition, in early March 2006, Germany reported H5N1 infection in a stone marten (a weasel-like mammal). The avian influenza A (H5N1) virus that emerged in Asia in 2003 is evolving and it's possible that other mammals may be susceptible to infection as well. CDC is working closely with domestic and international partners to continually monitor this situation and will provide additional information to the public as it becomes available.

Can domestic cats be infected with avian influenza viruses?

While domestic cats are not usually susceptible to influenza type A infection, it is known that they can become infected and die (both experimentally and naturally) with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses and, in a laboratory/research setting can spread the virus to other cats. It is not known whether domestic cats can spread the virus to other domestic cats under natural conditions.

How do cats become infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses?

All of the cases of influenza A (H5N1) infection in domestic cats reported to date have been associated with H5N1 outbreaks among domestic poultry or wild birds and are thought to have occurred by the cat eating raw infected birds.

How commonly have cats been infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses?

During the avian influenza A (H5N1) outbreak that occurred from 2003 to 2004 in Asia, there were only several unofficial reports of fatal infections in domestic cats. Studies carried out in the Netherlands and published in 2004 showed that housecats could be infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) and could spread the virus to other housecats. In these experiments, the cats became sick after direct inoculation of virus isolated from a fatal human case, and following the feeding of infected raw chicken. In February 2006, Germany reported that a domestic cat had died from influenza A (H5N1) infection. That cat lived in the northern island of Ruegen, where more than 100 wild birds are believed to have died of the disease. The cat probably got sick by eating an infected bird.

What about infection in large cats, like tigers?

Large cats kept in captivity have been diagnosed with avian influenza as well. In December 2003, two tigers and two leopards that were fed fresh chicken carcasses from a local slaughterhouse died at a zoo in Thailand. An investigation identified avian influenza A (H5N1) in tissue samples. In February and March 2004, the virus was detected in a clouded leopard and white tiger, respectively, both of which died in a zoo near Bangkok. In October 2004, 147 of 441 captive tigers in a zoo in Thailand died or were euthanized as a result of infection after being fed fresh chicken carcasses. The cats are thought to have gotten sick from eating infected raw meat. Results of a subsequent investigation suggested that at least some tiger-to-tiger transmission occurred in that facility.

Can cats spread H5N1 to people?

There is no evidence to date that cats can spread H5N1 to humans. No cases of avian influenza in humans have been linked to exposure to sick cats, and no outbreaks among populations of cats have been reported. All of the influenza A (H5N1) infections in cats reported to date appear to have been associated with outbreaks in domestic or wild birds and acquired through ingestion of raw meat from an infected bird.

What is the risk to humans or other species from cats infected with avian influenza H5N1 virus?

There is no evidence to date that cats can spread H5N1 to humans. No cases of avian influenza in humans have been linked to exposure to sick cats, and no outbreaks among populations of cats have been reported. All of the influenza A (H5N1) infections in cats reported to date appear to have been associated with outbreaks in domestic or wild birds and acquired through ingestion of raw infected meat.

What is the current risk that a cat in the United States will become infected with influenza A (H5N1)?

As long as there is no influenza A (H5N1) in the United States, there is no risk of a U.S. cat becoming infected with this disease. The virus circulating in Asia, Europe and Africa has not yet entered the United States. CDC is working closely with domestic and international partners to continually monitor this situation and will provide additional information to the public as it becomes available.

If avian influenza A (H5N1) is identified in the United States, how can I protect my cat?

As long as there is no H5N1 influenza in the United States, at this time there is no risk of a U.S. cat becoming infected with this disease. In Europe, however, where H5N1 has been reported in wild birds, poultry, several cats, and a stone marten (a member of the weasel family), the [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control](#) has issued preliminary recommendations for cat owners living in H5N1-affected areas. Additionally, the Food and Agriculture Organization has produced guidance for areas where H5N1 HPAI has been diagnosed or is suspected in poultry or wild birds.

Where can I find out more information about avian influenza infection in cats?

For more information about avian influenza in cats, see [Avian influenza — Frequently asked questions \(from the American Veterinary Medical Association\)](#) and [H5N1 in Cats \(from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations\)](#).

Can dogs be infected with avian influenza?

While dogs are not usually susceptible to avian influenza viruses, the avian influenza A (H5N1) virus that emerged in Asia in 2003 has been documented to infect other carnivore species (e.g. cats, tigers, leopards, stone martens). This has raised concern that this strain of avian influenza A (H5N1) virus may be capable of infecting dogs. An unpublished study carried out in 2005 by the National Institute of Animal Health in Bangkok indicated that dogs could be infected with the virus, but no associated disease was detected. This limited information is not enough to determine definitively whether dogs are susceptible to the virus. CDC is coordinating with USDA, veterinary associations, and other partners domestically and internationally on this issue and will provide additional information to the public as it becomes available.

How would dogs be infected with avian influenza A (H5N1)?

There is not enough information available about avian influenza A (H5N1) infection in dogs to

know how infection would occur. Affected domestic cats in Europe appear to have become infected by feeding upon raw infected poultry or wild birds. If dogs are susceptible to avian influenza A (H5N1), infection may be by the same route.

What is the current risk that a dog in the United States will become infected with avian influenza A (H5N1)?

As long as there is no influenza A (H5N1) in the United States, there is no risk of a U.S. dog becoming infected with this disease. The virus circulating in Asia, Europe and Africa has not yet entered the United States. CDC is working closely with domestic and international partners to continually monitor this situation and will provide additional information to the public as it becomes available.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/qa.htm>

Accessed: April 3, 2008

Consular Information Sheet: *India*

March 25, 2008

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. Tourist facilities have varying degrees of comfort, and amenities are widely available in the major population centers and main tourist areas.

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: U.S. citizens require a valid passport and valid Indian visa to enter and exit India for any purpose. Visitors, including those on official U.S. government business, must obtain visas at an Indian Embassy or Consulate abroad prior to entering the country, as there are no provisions for visas upon arrival. Those arriving without a valid passport and valid visa are subject to immediate deportation. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India are unable to assist when U.S. citizens arrive without proper documentation. Each visitor should carry photocopies of the bio-data page of the traveler's U.S. passport and the page containing the Indian visa in order to facilitate obtaining an exit visa from the Indian government in the event of theft or loss of the passport. Replacing a lost visa in order to exit the country takes up to three business days.

Americans wishing to visit India are responsible for requesting the correct type of visa from the Indian Embassy or Consulate, as there generally are no provisions for changing one's immigration category (e.g., from tourist to work visa) once admitted. As of October 1, 2007, the Indian Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. outsourced the visa application process to Travia Visa Outsourcing: <http://indiavisa.traviaoutsourcing.com>. Diplomatic and Official visa applications, however, are still accepted directly at the Indian Embassy and Consulates. Foreign citizens whose primary purpose of travel is to participate in religious activities should obtain a missionary visa rather than a tourist visa. Indian immigration authorities have deported American citizens who entered India with a tourist visa and conducted religious activities. American travelers to India who work in "designated institutes and technology areas" will be subject to a two week waiting period in the visa application process and will be required to submit supplemental information with their visa application. Scholars planning to conduct research in India often need research clearances in addition to their visas. Specific information is available at the Indian Embassy and Consulates.

Foreign citizens who visit India to study, do research, work or act as missionaries, as well as all travelers planning to stay more than 180 days are required to register, generally within 14 days of arrival, with the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) closest to where they will be staying. The FRRO maintains offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai (known as the "Chennai Immigration Office"), Kolkata and Amritsar. In smaller cities and towns, the local police headquarters will normally perform this function. General information regarding Indian visa and immigration rules, including the addresses and telephone numbers for the FRRO offices, can be found at the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs web site for its Bureau of Immigration at <http://www.immigrationindia.nic.in>.

If a foreign citizen (e.g., an American) overstays his or her Indian visa, or otherwise violates Indian visa regulations, the traveler may require a clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to leave the country. Such travelers generally must pay a fine, and in some cases, may be jailed until their deportation can be arranged. Visa violators seeking an exit clearance can visit

the following office any weekday from 10 am - 12 noon: Ministry of Home Affairs, Foreigners Division, Jaisalmer House, 26 Man Singh Road, New Delhi 110 011 (tel. +91-11-2338-5748).

For the most current information on entry and exit requirements, please contact the Embassy of India at 2536 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 939-9806 (<http://www.indianembassy.org>) or the Indian Consulates in Chicago (<http://chicago.indianconsulate.com>), New York (<http://www.indiacgny.org>), San Francisco (<http://www.cgisf.org>) or Houston (<http://www.cgihouston.org>). Outside the United States, inquiries should be made at the nearest Indian embassy or consulate.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the prevention of [international child abduction](#) can be found on our web site. (Additional information on [dual nationality](#) in India appears below under "Special Circumstances.") For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information](#) sheet.

SAFETY AND SECURITY: A number of anti-Western terrorist groups (some of which are on the U.S. government's list of foreign terrorist organizations) are believed to be active in India including, but not limited to, Islamic extremist groups such as Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e Tayyiba, and Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami. While historically the state of Jammu & Kashmir has been a focal point of terrorist activity, bomb blasts resulting in deaths and injuries have occurred in public places such as markets, as well as on public transportation such as trains and buses throughout India. Examples of major attacks in recent years include an attack on a government paramilitary facility in Uttar Pradesh (December 2007), coordinated bomb blasts at court facilities in three cities in Uttar Pradesh (November 2007), an explosives blast in a cinema hall in Punjab (November 2007), two explosions at a popular park and restaurant in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh (August 2007), an explosion at the main mosque in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh (May 2007), the detonation of explosive devices on a train northwest of Delhi (February 2007), simultaneous attacks on Mumbai commuter trains (July 2006), simultaneous attacks on a train station and places of worship in Varanasi (March 2006), and simultaneous attacks on several markets in New Delhi (October 2005). Terrorist incidents causing fewer casualties occur on a frequent basis, including a few in which American citizens were injured. The motive for many of these attacks has not been clearly established, although it is believed that U.S. citizens and foreigners in general were not specifically targeted in these attacks. Specific areas of concern are addressed below under "Areas of Instability."

Beyond the threat from terrorism, demonstrations often cause disruption. Local demonstrations can begin spontaneously and escalate with little warning, disrupting transportation systems and city services and posing risks to travelers' personal safety. In response to such events, Indian authorities occasionally impose curfews and/or restrict travel. U.S. citizens 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). In addition, religious and inter-caste violence is unpredictable and occurs occasionally. In some cases, demonstrators specifically block roads near popular tourist sites in order to gain the attention of Indian authorities; occasionally vehicles transporting tourists are attacked in these incidents. Mobs have, however, attacked Indian and American missionaries and social workers as such activity provokes strong reactions in some areas. Anti-Christian violence has seen a slight increase in recent years in certain areas of India, such as in Gujarat. U.S. citizens should monitor local television and print media and contact the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. Consulate for further information about the current situation in areas where they wish to travel. Finally, visitors should exercise caution when swimming in open waters along the Indian coastline, particularly during the monsoon season. Every year, several people in Goa, Mumbai, Puri (Orissa), and other areas drown due to the strong undertow. It is important for

visitors to heed warnings posted or advised at beaches and avoid swimming in the ocean during the monsoon season.

AREAS OF INSTABILITY:Jammu & Kashmir: The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens avoid travel to the state of Jammu & Kashmir, with the exception of visits to the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh. A number of terrorist groups operate in the state, targeting security forces that are present throughout the region, particularly along the Line of Control (LOC) separating Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, and those stationed in the primary tourist destinations in the Kashmir Valley: Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam. Since 1989, as many as 60,000 people (terrorists, security forces, and civilians) have been killed in the Kashmir conflict. Many terrorist incidents take place in the state's summer capital of Srinagar, but the majority of attacks occur in rural areas. Foreigners are particularly visible, vulnerable, and definitely at risk. There have been attacks specifically targeted at civilians. For example: in October 2007 five soldiers and two civilians were killed in an IED blast carried out by militants in the Baramulla district of Kashmir; in August 2007 terrorists lobbed a grenade at the venue of an Independence Day function in the Bandipora district; in July 2007 a blast on an out-of-state tourist bus killed six and injured 20 civilians in the capital, Srinagar. The Indian government prohibits foreign tourists from visiting certain areas along the LOC (see the section on Restricted Areas, below). U.S. Government employees are prohibited from traveling to the state of Jammu & Kashmir (except for Ladakh) without permission from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. When traveling to Kashmir, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profiles, limit their lengths of stay, and exercise extreme caution.

India-Pakistan Border: The State Department recommends that U.S. citizens avoid travel to areas within five to ten kilometers of the border between India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan maintain a strong military presence on both sides of the border. The only official India-Pakistan border crossing point for persons who are not citizens of India or Pakistan is in the state of Punjab between Atari, India, and Wagah, Pakistan. The border crossing is usually open, but travelers are advised to confirm the current status of the border crossing prior to commencing travel. A Pakistani visa is required to enter Pakistan. An American citizen seeking a Pakistani visa while in India must first come to the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi to sign an affidavit of intent to apply for the Pakistani visa. This is a requirement of the Pakistani government.

Both India and Pakistan claim an area of the Karakoram mountain range that includes the Siachen glacier. U.S. citizens traveling to or climbing peaks in the disputed areas face significant risks. The disputed area includes the following peaks: Rimo Peak; Apsarasas I, II, and III; Tegam Kangri I, II and III; Suingri Kangri; Ghiant I and II; Indira Col; and Sia Kangri.

Travelers may check with the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi for information on current conditions. (Please see the section on Registration/Embassy and Consulate Locations below.)

Northeast States: Incidents of violence by ethnic insurgent groups, including the bombing of buses and trains, occur with a degree of frequency in parts of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. While U.S. citizens have not been specifically targeted, they may be affected as bystanders. Visitors to India's Northeast states are cautioned not to travel outside major cities at night. Security laws are in force, and the central government has deployed security personnel. Certain Northeastern states can be visited by foreigners only with a permit (see the section on Restricted Areas, below.) Travelers may check with the U.S. Consulate in Kolkata for information on current conditions. (Please see the section on Registration/Embassy and Consulate Locations, below.) U.S. Government employees are prohibited from traveling to the state of Manipur and to portions of the Karbi Anglong districts and Tinsukia in Assam without permission from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi and U.S. Consulate in Kolkata. When traveling to these areas, U.S.

official travelers attempt to lower their profiles, limit their lengths of stay, and exercise extreme caution.

East Central and Southern India: A disparate number of Maoist extremist groups called "Naxalites" are active in the region, primarily in rural areas. The Naxalites have a long history of conflict with state and national authorities, including frequent attacks on police, paramilitary forces, and government officials. The Naxalites have not specifically targeted U.S. citizens, but have attacked symbolic targets that have included Western companies. The primary Naxalite group is represented by the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The party's regional affiliates are active in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkand, and West Bengal. There was significant Naxalite activity in these states in 2007. In addition, the State of Orissa has seen violence against foreigners accused of proselytizing.

Restricted Areas: Certain parts of India are designated as "restricted areas" by the Indian Government, and require special advance permission to visit. These areas include:

- The state of Mizoram,
- The state of Manipur,
- The state of Arunachal Pradesh,
- The state of Nagaland,
- The state of Sikkim,
- Portions of the state of Himachal Pradesh near the Chinese border,
- Portions of the state of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) near the Chinese border,
- Portions of the state of Rajasthan near the Pakistani border,
- Portions of the state of Jammu & Kashmir near the Line of Control with Pakistan,
- The Andaman & Nicobar Islands,
- The Union Territory of the Laccadives Islands (Lakshadweep), and
- The Tibetan colony in Mundgod, Karnataka.

"Restricted Area Permits" can be obtained outside of India at Indian embassies and consulates abroad, or within India, from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division) at Jaisalmer House, 26 Man Singh Road, New Delhi. The states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim all maintain official guesthouses in New Delhi, each of which also can issue Restricted Area Permits for their respective states for certain travelers. Tourists also should exercise caution while visiting Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) in Tamil Nadu as the Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Center, Kalpakkam, is located just south of the site and is not clearly marked as a restricted and dangerous area.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor travel information included on the web sites of the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi as well as the Consulates General in Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras) and Kolkata (Calcutta) (see contact information below). For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#), as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#), can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers

can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's pamphlet [A Safe Trip Abroad](#).

CRIME: Petty crime, especially theft of personal property, is common, particularly on trains or buses. Pickpockets can be very adept, and women have reported having their bags snatched, purse-straps cut or the bottom of their purses slit without their knowledge. Theft of U.S. passports is quite common, particularly in major tourist areas, on overnight trains, and at airports. Train travelers are urged to lock their sleeping compartments and take valuables with them when leaving their berths. Air travelers are advised to carefully watch their bags in the arrival and departure areas outside of airports. Violent crime, especially directed against foreigners, has traditionally been uncommon, although in recent years there has been a modest increase. As U.S. citizens' purchasing power is comparatively large, travelers also should exercise modesty and caution in their financial dealings in India to reduce the chance of being a target for robbery or other crime. Gangs and criminal elements operate in major cities and have sometimes targeted unsuspecting businessmen and their family members for kidnapping.

U.S. citizens, particularly women, are cautioned not to travel alone in India. Western women continue to report incidents of physical harassment by groups of men. Known as "Eve-teasing," these incidents can be quite frightening. While India is generally safe for foreign visitors, according to the latest figures by Indian authorities, rape is the fastest growing crime in India. Among large cities, Delhi experienced the highest number of crimes against women. Although most victims have been local residents, recent sexual attacks against female visitors in tourist areas underline the fact that foreign women are also at risk and should exercise vigilance.

Women should observe stringent security precautions, including avoiding using public transport after dark without the company of known and trustworthy companions; restricting evening entertainment to well known venues; and avoiding walking in isolated areas alone at any time of day. Women should also ensure their hotel room numbers remain confidential and insist the doors of their hotel rooms have chains, deadlocks, and spy-holes. In addition, it is advisable for women to hire reliable cars and drivers and avoid traveling alone in hired taxis, especially during the hours of darkness. It is preferable to obtain taxis from hotels rather than hailing them on the street. If women encounter threatening situations, they can call 100 for police assistance.

SCAMS: Major airports, train stations and tourist sites are often used by scam artists looking to prey on visitors, often by creating a distraction. Taxi drivers and others, including train porters, may solicit travelers with "come-on" offers of cheap transportation and/or hotels. Travelers accepting such offers have frequently found themselves the victims of scams, including offers to assist with "necessary" transfers to the domestic airport, disproportionately expensive hotel rooms, unwanted "tours," unwelcome "purchases," and even threats to the traveler when the tourists try to decline to pay. There have been several disturbing reports of tourists being held hostage on houseboats in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, and forced to pay thousands of dollars in the face of threats of violence against the traveler and his/her family members.

Travelers should exercise care when hiring transportation and/or guides and use only well-known travel agents to book trips. Some scam artists have lured travelers by displaying their name on a sign when they leave the airport. Another popular scam is to drop money or to squirt something on the clothing of an unsuspecting traveler and during the distraction to rob them of their valuables. Individual tourists have also been given drugged drinks or tainted food to make them more vulnerable to theft, particularly at train stations. Even food or drink purchased in front of the traveler from a canteen or vendor could be tainted. To protect against robbery of personal belongings, it is best not to accept food or drink from strangers.

Some vendors sell rugs or other expensive items that may not be of the quality promised.

Travelers should deal only with reputable businesses and should not hand over credit cards or money unless they are certain that goods being shipped to them are the goods they purchased. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it is best avoided. Most Indian states have official tourism bureaus set up to handle travelers' complaints.

Travelers should be aware of a number of other scams that have been perpetrated against foreign travelers, particularly in Goa, Jaipur, and Agra. The scams generally target younger travelers and involve suggestions that money can be made by privately transporting gems or gold (both of which can result in arrest) or by taking delivery abroad of expensive carpets, supposedly while avoiding customs duties. The scam artists describe profits that can be made upon delivery of the goods, and require the traveler to pay a "deposit" as part of the transaction. The items are always fake, and if they were real, the traveler could be subject to arrest.

INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Victims of a crime in India, including loss or theft of a passport, should obtain a copy of the police report (called an "FIR" or "First Information Report") from local police at the time of reporting the incident. A copy of this report is helpful for insurance purposes in replacing lost valuables. It is required by the Indian Government in order to obtain an exit visa to leave India in the event of a lost or stolen passport. Local authorities generally are unable to take any meaningful action without the filing of a police report. See our information on [Victims of Crime](#).

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: The quality of medical care in India varies considerably. Medical care is available in the major population centers that approaches and occasionally meets western standards, but adequate medical care is usually very limited or unavailable in rural areas.

Indian health regulations require all travelers arriving from Sub-Saharan Africa or other yellow-fever areas to have evidence of vaccination against yellow fever. Travelers who do not have such proof are subject to immediate deportation or a six-day detention in the yellow-fever quarantine center. U.S. citizens who transit through any part of sub-Saharan Africa, even for one day, are advised to carry proof of yellow fever immunization.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect-bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. These web sites provide useful information, such as suggested vaccinations for visitors to India, safe food and water precautions, appropriate measures to avoid contraction of mosquito-borne diseases (such as malaria and Japanese B encephalitis), suggestions to avoid altitude sickness, etc. Further, these sites provide information on disease outbreaks that may arise from time to time - outbreaks of mosquito-borne viral diseases such as dengue fever and chikungunya occur in various parts of India each year, so travelers should check the sites shortly before traveling to India. Further health information for travelers is available at

<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>.

In January and February 2008, there were outbreaks of Avian Influenza, H5N1 virus, in poultry in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal including some of the districts surrounding the city of Kolkata. The outbreak affected poultry but there were no reported human cases. There were also Avian Influenza outbreaks in poultry in July 2007 in Manipur and in the spring of 2006, in rural areas of the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. American citizens traveling in India should take all necessary precautions. Updates on the avian influenza situation in India are published on the Embassy's web site at <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/acsinfluenza.html>.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in India. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbookCh4-TB.aspx>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://who.int/ith/en>.

Medical tourism is a rapidly growing industry. Companies offering vacation packages bundled with medical consultations and financing options provide direct-to-consumer advertising over the internet. Such medical packages often claim to provide high quality care, but the quality of health care in India is highly variable. People seeking health care in India should understand that medical systems operate differently from those in the United States and are not subject to the same rules and regulations. Anyone interested in traveling for medical purposes should consult with their local physician before traveling and refer to the information from CDC found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh2-HealthCareAbroad.aspx>.

The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India maintain lists of local doctors and hospitals, all of which are published on their respective websites under "U.S. Citizen Services." Please see "Registration/Embassy and Consulate Location" section below.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. - Many insurers rarely make payment directly to overseas healthcare providers. For healthcare received in India, you will most likely need to pay up front and be reimbursed later for expenses you incur during treatment. Please see our information on [medical insurance overseas](#).

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning India is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel by road in India is dangerous. A number of U.S. citizens have suffered fatal traffic accidents in recent years. Travel at night is particularly hazardous. Buses, patronized by hundreds of millions of Indians, are convenient in that they serve almost every city of any size. However, they are usually driven fast, recklessly, and without consideration for the rules of the road. Accidents are quite common. Trains are safer than buses, but train accidents still occur more frequently than in developed countries.

In order to drive in India, one must have either a valid Indian driver's license or a valid international driver's license. Because of difficult road and traffic conditions, many Americans who visit India wisely choose to hire a local driver.

On Indian roads, the safest driving policy is to always assume that other drivers will not respond to a traffic situation in the same way you would in the United States. On Indian roads, might

makes right, and buses and trucks epitomize this fact. For instance, buses and trucks often run red lights and merge directly into traffic at yield points and traffic circles. Cars, auto-rickshaws, bicycles and pedestrians behave only slightly more cautiously. Frequent use of one's horn or flashing of headlights to announce one's presence is both customary and wise.

Outside major cities, main roads and other roads are poorly maintained and congested. Even main roads often have only two lanes, with poor visibility and inadequate warning markers. On the few divided highways one can expect to meet local transportation traveling in the wrong direction, 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, horse or elephant riders en route to weddings, bicycles, and free-roaming livestock. Traffic in India moves on the left. It is important to be alert while crossing streets and intersections, especially after dark as traffic is coming in the "wrong" direction (i.e., from the left). Travelers should remember to use seatbelts in both rear and front seats where available, and to ask their drivers to maintain a safe speed.

If a driver hits a pedestrian or a cow, the vehicle and its occupants are at risk of being attacked by passersby. Such attacks pose significant risk of injury or death to the vehicle's occupants or at least of incineration of the vehicle. It can thus be unsafe to remain at the scene of an accident of this nature, and drivers may instead wish to seek out the nearest police station.

Protestors often use road blockage as a means of publicizing their grievances, causing severe inconvenience to travelers. Visitors should monitor local news reports for any reports of road disturbances.

Please refer to our [Road Safety](#) page for more information.

Emergency Numbers: The following emergency numbers work in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata:

- Police 100
- Fire Brigade 101
- Ambulance 102

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of India's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of India's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

Civil aircraft have been detained a number of times for deviating from approved flight plans. U.S. citizens piloting civil aircraft in India must file any changes to previous flight plans with the appropriate Indian authorities and may not over-fly restricted airspace.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

Dual Nationality: In 2006, India launched the "Overseas Citizens of India" (OCI) program, which has often been mischaracterized as a [dual nationality](#) program, as it does not grant Indian citizenship. Thus, an American who obtains an OCI card is not a citizen of India and remains a citizen of the United States. An OCI card in reality is similar to a U.S. "green card" in that a holder can travel to and from India indefinitely, work in India, study in India, and own property in India (except for certain agricultural and plantation properties). An OCI holder, however, does not receive an Indian passport, cannot vote in Indian elections and is not eligible for Indian government employment. The OCI program is similar to the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) card introduced by the Indian government several years ago, except that PIO holders must still register

with Indian immigration authorities, and PIO cards are not issued for an indefinite period. American citizens of Indian descent can apply for PIO or OCI cards at the Indian Embassy in Washington, or at the Indian Consulates in Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Houston. Inside India, American citizens can apply at the nearest FRRO office (please see "Entry/Exit Requirements" section above for more information on the FRRO). For more information on the OCI program, please see www.mha.nic.in/oci/oci-main.htm.

Religious Activities: Foreign visitors planning to engage in religious proselytizing are required by Indian law to have a "missionary" visa. Immigration authorities have determined that certain activities, including speaking at religious meetings to which the general public is invited, may violate immigration law if the traveler does not hold a missionary visa. Foreigners with tourist visas who engage in missionary activity are subject to deportation and possible criminal prosecution. The states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh have active legislation regulating conversion from one religious faith to another. Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh currently have inactive laws restricting conversion and are awaiting accompanying regulations needed for enforcement. The state legislatures of Rajasthan have passed a similar act, but it was twice refused by the Governor and forwarded to the President for legal review and guidance on its constitutional merit. U.S. citizens intending to engage in missionary activity may wish to seek legal advice to determine whether the activities they intend to pursue are permitted under Indian law. Foreigners suspected of or actually proselytizing Hindus have been attacked in conservative, rural areas in India, including Orissa.

Customs Restrictions: Indian customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from India of items such as firearms, antiquities, electronic equipment, currency, ivory, gold objects, and other prohibited materials. Even transit passengers require permission from the Government of India to bring in such items. Those not complying risk arrest and/or fine and confiscation of these items. If charged with any alleged legal violations by Indian law enforcement, it is recommended that an attorney review any document prior to signing. The Government of India requires the registration of antique items with the local police along with a photograph of the item. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of India in Washington or one of India's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. More information is available from the Indian Central Board of Excise and Customs at <http://www.cbec.gov.in>. Another useful site is <http://www.igiacustoms.gov.in>. In many countries around the world, including India, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under Indian law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available in a report prepared by the Office of the United States Trade Representative called the "Special 301 Report." This report is updated each year, and can be viewed at http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Reports_Publications/Section_Index.html.

Indian customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, e-mail atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit <http://www.uscib.org> for details. Please see our [Customs Information](#).

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Indian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. For example, certain comments or gestures towards women, Indian national symbols, or religion that are legal in the

United States may be considered a criminal violation in India, subjecting the accused to possible fines or imprisonment. Furthermore, since the police may arrest anyone who is accused of committing a crime (even if the allegation is frivolous in nature), the Indian criminal justice system is often used to escalate personal disagreements into criminal charges. This practice has been increasingly exploited by dissatisfied business partners, contractors, estranged spouses, or other persons with whom the U.S. citizen has a disagreement, occasionally resulting in the jailing of U.S. citizens pending resolution of their disputes. At the very least, such circumstances can delay the U.S. citizen's timely departure from India, and may result in an unintended long-term stay in the country. Corruption in India, especially at local levels, is a concern, as evidenced by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index of 3.5, ranking India in 72nd place of the world's countries. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in India are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in India is a crime, and is prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on [Criminal Penalties](#).

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: India is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Child Abduction (although the Government of India has expressed its intention to sign the convention at some point in the future), nor is [international child abduction](#) considered to be a crime under Indian law. For information see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on [intercountry adoption](#) and [international parental child abduction](#).

REGISTRATION/EMBASSY AND CONSULATE LOCATIONS: Americans living or traveling in India are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security in India. Americans without Internet access may register in person with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

- The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is located at Shanti Path, Chanakya Puri 110021; telephone +91-11-2419-8000; fax +91-11-2419-8407. The Embassy's Internet home page address is <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov>. (Note that the "+" sign indicates your international access code, which in the United States is 011-, but which is 00- in most other countries.)
- The U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai (Bombay) is located at Lincoln House, 78 Bhulabhai Desai Road, 400026, telephone +91-22-2363-3611; fax +91-22-2368-5483. The Internet home page address is <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>.
- The U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata (Calcutta) is at 5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, 700071; telephone +91-33-3984-2400; fax +91-33-2282-2335. The Internet home page address is <http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov>.
- The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai (Madras) is at 220 Anna Salai, Gemini Circle, 600006; telephone +91-44-2857-4000; fax +91-44-2857-4443. The Internet home page address is <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>.

India

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*

This page was last updated on 20 March, 2008

Background:



Aryan tribes from the northwest infiltrated onto the Indian subcontinent about 1500 B.C.; their merger with the earlier Dravidian inhabitants created the classical Indian culture. The Maurya Empire of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. - which reached its zenith under ASHOKA - united much of South Asia. The Golden Age ushered in by the Gupta dynasty (4th to 6th centuries A.D.) saw a flowering of Indian science, art, and culture. Arab incursions starting in the 8th century and Turkic in the 12th were followed by those of European traders, beginning in the late 15th century. By the 19th century, Britain had assumed political control of virtually all Indian lands. Indian armed forces in the British army played a vital role in both World Wars. Nonviolent resistance to British colonialism led by Mohandas GANDHI and Jawaharlal NEHRU brought independence in 1947. The subcontinent was divided into the secular state of India and the smaller Muslim state of Pakistan. A third war between the two countries in 1971 resulted in East Pakistan becoming the separate nation of Bangladesh. India's nuclear weapons testing in 1998 caused Pakistan to conduct its own tests that same year. The dispute between the countries over the state of Kashmir is ongoing, but discussions and confidence-building measures have led to decreased tensions since 2002. Despite impressive gains in economic investment and output, India faces pressing problems such as significant overpopulation, environmental degradation, extensive poverty, and ethnic and religious strife.

Geography

India

[Top of Page](#)

Location:



Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and Pakistan

Geographic coordinates:



20 00 N, 77 00 E

Map references:



Asia

Area:



total: 3,287,590 sq km

land: 2,973,190 sq km

water: 314,400 sq km

Area - comparative:



slightly more than one-third the size of the US

Land boundaries:



total: 14,103 km

border countries: Bangladesh 4,053 km, Bhutan 605 km, Burma 1,463 km, China 3,380 km, Nepal 1,690 km, Pakistan 2,912 km

Coastline:



7,000 km

Maritime claims:



territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

Climate:



varies from tropical monsoon in south to temperate in north

Terrain:



upland plain (Deccan Plateau) in south, flat to rolling plain along the Ganges, deserts in west, Himalayas in north

Elevation extremes:



lowest point: Indian Ocean 0 m

highest point: Kanchenjunga 8,598 m

Natural resources:



coal (fourth-largest reserves in the world), iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, titanium ore, chromite, natural gas, diamonds, petroleum, limestone, arable land

Land use:



arable land: 48.83%

permanent crops: 2.8%

other: 48.37% (2005)

Irrigated land:



558,080 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:





1,907.8 cu km (1999)

**Freshwater withdrawal
(domestic/industrial/agricultural):**





total: 645.84 cu km/yr (8%/5%/86%)

per capita: 585 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards:  



droughts; flash floods, as well as widespread and destructive flooding from monsoonal rains; severe thunderstorms; earthquakes

Environment - current issues:  

deforestation; soil erosion; overgrazing; desertification; air pollution from industrial effluents and vehicle emissions; water pollution from raw sewage and runoff of agricultural pesticides; tap water is not potable throughout the country; huge and growing population is overstraining natural resources

Environment - international agreements:  

party to: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:  

dominates South Asian subcontinent; near important Indian Ocean trade routes; Kanchenjunga, third tallest mountain in the world, lies on the border with Nepal



People

India

[Top of Page](#)

Population:   



1,129,866,154 (July 2007 est.)

Age structure:  

0-14 years: 31.8% (male 188,208,196/female 171,356,024)
15-64 years: 63.1% (male 366,977,821/female 346,034,565)
65 years and over: 5.1% (male 27,258,259/female 30,031,289) (2007 est.)

Median age:  

total: 24.8 years
male: 24.5 years
female: 25.2 years (2007 est.)

Population growth rate:  

1.606% (2007 est.)

Birth rate:   

22.69 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)

Death rate:



6.58 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)

Net migration rate:



-0.05 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 est.)

Sex ratio:



at birth: 1.12 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.098 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.061 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.908 male(s)/female
total population: 1.064 male(s)/female (2007 est.)

Infant mortality rate:



total: 34.61 deaths/1,000 live births
male: 39.42 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 29.23 deaths/1,000 live births (2007 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:



total population: 68.59 years
male: 66.28 years
female: 71.17 years (2007 est.)

Total fertility rate:



2.81 children born/woman (2007 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:



0.9% (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:



5.1 million (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths:



310,000 (2001 est.)

Major infectious diseases:



degree of risk: high
food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever
vectorborne diseases: chikungunya, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria
animal contact disease: rabies
note: highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza has been identified in this country; it poses a negligible risk with extremely rare cases possible among US citizens who have close contact with birds (2008)

Nationality:



noun: Indian(s)

adjective: Indian

Ethnic groups:



Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3% (2000)

Religions:



Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.1% (2001 census)

Languages:



English enjoys associate status but is the most important language for national, political, and commercial communication; Hindi is the national language and primary tongue of 30% of the people; there are 21 other official languages: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanscrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu; Hindustani is a popular variant of Hindi/Urdu spoken widely throughout northern India but is not an official language

Literacy:



definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 61%

male: 73.4%

female: 47.8% (2001 census)

Government

India

[Top of Page](#)

Country name:



conventional long form: Republic of India

conventional short form: India

local long form: Republic of India/Bharatiya Ganarajya

local short form: India/Bharat

Government type:



federal republic

Capital:



name: New Delhi

geographic coordinates: 28 36 N, 77 12 E



time difference: UTC+5.5 (10.5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:





28 states and 7 union territories*; Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh*, Chhattisgarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli*, Daman and Diu*, Delhi*,


Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep*, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Puducherry*, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal

Independence:  



15 August 1947 (from UK)

National holiday:  


Republic Day, 26 January (1950)

Constitution:  

26 January 1950; amended many times

Legal system:  

based on English common law; judicial review of legislative acts; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; separate personal law codes apply to Muslims, Christians, and Hindus

Suffrage:  

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:  

chief of state: President Pratibha PATIL (since 25 July 2007); Vice President Hamid ANSARI (since 11 August 2007)

head of government: Prime Minister Manmohan SINGH (since 22 May 2004)

cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister

elections: president elected by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both houses of Parliament and the legislatures of the states for a five-year term (no term limits); election last held 21 July 2007 (next to be held in July 2012); vice president elected by both houses of Parliament for a five-year term; election last held 12 August 2002 (next to be held August 2007); prime minister chosen by parliamentary members of the majority party following legislative elections; election last held April - May 2004 (next to be held May 2009)

election results: Pratibha PATIL elected president; percent of vote - 65.8%; Bhairon Singh SHEKHAWAT - 34.2%

Legislative branch:  

bicameral Parliament or Sansad consists of the Council of States or Rajya Sabha (a body consisting of not more than 250 members up to 12 of whom are appointed by the president, the remainder are chosen by the elected members of the state and territorial assemblies; members serve six-year terms) and the People's Assembly or Lok

Sabha (545 seats; 543 elected by popular vote, 2 appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms)
elections: People's Assembly - last held 20 April through 10 May 2004 (next must be held before May 2009)
election results: People's Assembly - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - INC 147, BJP 129, CPI (M) 43, SP 38, RJD 23, DMK 16, BSP 15, SS 12, BJD 11, CPI 10, NCP 10, JD (U) 8, SAD 8, PMK 6, JMM 5, LJSP 4, MDMK 4, TDP 4, TRS 4, independent 6, other 29, vacant 13; note - seats by party as of December 2006

Judicial branch:



Supreme Court (one chief justice and 25 associate justices are appointed by the president and remain in office until they reach the age of 65 or are removed for "proved misbehavior")

Political parties and leaders:



Bahujan Samaj Party or BSP [MAYAWATI]; Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP [Rajnath SINGH]; Biju Janata Dal or BJD [Naveen PATNAIK]; Communist Party of India or CPI [Ardhendu Bhushan BARDHAN]; Communist Party of India-Marxist or CPI-M [Prakash KARAT]; Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or DMK [M. KARUNANIDHI]; Indian National Congress or INC [Sonia GANDHI]; Janata Dal (United) or JD(U) [Sharad YADEV]; Jharkhand Mukti Morcha or JMM [Shibu SOREN]; Lok Jan Shakti Party or LJSP [Ram Vilas PASWAN]; Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or MDMK [VAIKU]; Nationalist Congress Party or NCP [Sharad PAWAR]; Pattali Makkal Katchi or PMK [S. RAMADOSS]; Rashtriya Janata Dal or RJD [Laloo Prasad YADAV]; Samajwadi Party or SP [Mulayam Singh YADAV]; Shiromani Akali Dal or SAD [Prakash Singh BADAL]; Shiv Sena or SS [Bal THACKERAY]; Telangana Rashtra Samithi or TRS [K. Chandrasekhar RAO]; Telugu Desam Party or TDP [Chandrababu NAIDU]; note - India has dozens of national and regional political parties; only parties with four or more seats in the People's Assembly are listed

Political pressure groups and leaders:



numerous religious or militant/chauvinistic organizations, including Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh; various separatist groups seeking greater communal and/or regional autonomy, including the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in the Kashmir Valley and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in the Northeast

International organization participation:



ADB, AfDB, ARF, ASEAN (dialogue partner), BIMSTEC, BIS, C, CERN (observer), CP, EAS, FAO, G-15, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD,

ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAS (observer), MIGA, MONUC, NAM, OAS (observer), OPCW, PCA, PIF (partner), SAARC, SACEP, SCO (observer), UN, UNCTAD, UNDOF, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNMEE, UNMIS, UNOCI, UNWTO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:



chief of mission: Ambassador Ranendra SEN
chancery: 2107 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008;
note - Consular Wing located at 2536 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008
telephone: [1] (202) 939-7000
FAX: [1] (202) 265-4351
consulate(s) general: Chicago, Houston, New York, San Francisco

Diplomatic representation from the US:



chief of mission: Ambassador David C. MULFORD
embassy: Shantipath, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021
mailing address: use embassy street address
telephone: [91] (011) 2419-8000
FAX: [91] (11) 2419-0017
consulate(s) general: Chennai (Madras), Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai (Bombay)

Flag description:



three equal horizontal bands of saffron (subdued orange) (top), white, and green with a blue chakra (24-spoked wheel) centered in the white band; similar to the flag of Niger, which has a small orange disk centered in the white band

Economy

India

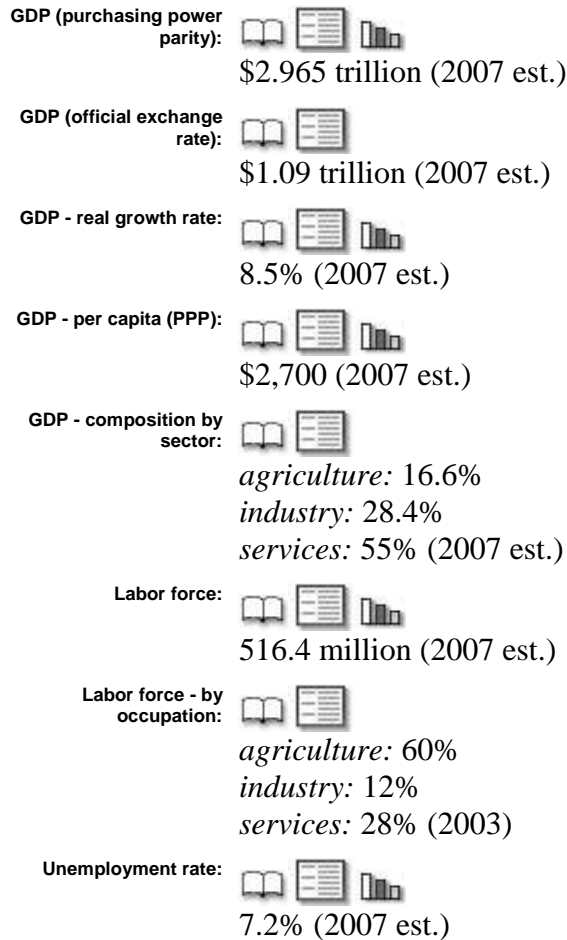
[Top of Page](#)









































Economy - overview:














































India's diverse economy encompasses traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, a wide range of modern industries, and a multitude of services. Services are the major source of economic growth, accounting for more than half of India's output with less than one third of its labor force. About three-fifths of the work force is in agriculture, leading the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government to articulate an economic reform program that includes developing basic infrastructure to improve the lives of the rural poor and boost economic performance. The government has reduced controls on foreign trade and investment. Higher limits on foreign direct investment were permitted in a few key sectors, such as telecommunications. However, tariff spikes in sensitive categories,

including agriculture, and incremental progress on economic reforms still hinder foreign access to India's vast and growing market. Privatization of government-owned industries remains stalled and continues to generate political debate; populist pressure from within the UPA government and from its Left Front allies continues to restrain needed initiatives. The economy has posted an average growth rate of more than 7% in the decade since 1997, reducing poverty by about 10 percentage points. India achieved 8.5% GDP growth in 2006, and again in 2007, significantly expanding production of manufactures. India is capitalizing on its large numbers of well-educated people skilled in the English language to become a major exporter of software services and software workers. Economic expansion has helped New Delhi continue to make progress in reducing its federal fiscal deficit. However, strong growth combined with easy consumer credit and a real estate boom fueled inflation concerns in 2006 and 2007, leading to a series of central bank interest rate hikes that have slowed credit growth and eased inflation concerns. The huge and growing population is the fundamental social, economic, and environmental problem.



Population below poverty line:	 	25% (2007 est.)
Household income or consumption by percentage share:	 	<i>lowest 10%: 3.6%</i> <i>highest 10%: 31.1%</i> (2004)
Distribution of family income - Gini index:	 	36.8 (2004)
Inflation rate (consumer prices):	  	5.9% (2007 est.)
Investment (gross fixed):	  	31.8% of GDP (2007 est.)
Budget:	 	<i>revenues: \$145.2 billion</i> <i>expenditures: \$182.4 billion</i> (2007 est.)
Public debt:	  	58.8% of GDP (federal and state debt combined) (2007 est.)
Agriculture - products:	 	rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes; cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry; fish
Industries:	 	textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software
Industrial production growth rate:	  	10% (2007 est.)
Electricity - production:	  	661.6 billion kWh (2005)
Electricity - consumption:	  	488.5 billion kWh (2005)
Electricity - exports:	 	67 million kWh (2005)
Electricity - imports:	 	1.764 billion kWh (2005)
Oil - production:	  	834,600 bbl/day (2005 est.)
Oil - consumption:	  	

		2.438 million bbl/day (2005 est.)
Oil - exports:	  	350,000 bbl/day (2005 est.)
Oil - imports:	  	2.098 million bbl/day (2004 est.)
Oil - proved reserves:	  	5.848 billion bbl (1 January 2006 est.)
Natural gas - production:	  	28.68 billion cu m (2005 est.)
Natural gas - consumption:	  	34.47 billion cu m (2005 est.)
Natural gas - exports:	  	0 cu m (2005 est.)
Natural gas - imports:	  	5.793 billion cu m (2005)
Natural gas - proved reserves:	  	1.056 trillion cu m (1 January 2006 est.)
Current account balance:	  	-\$18.53 billion (2007 est.)
Exports:	  	\$140.8 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)
Exports - commodities:	 	petroleum products, textile goods, gems and jewelry, engineering goods, chemicals, leather manufactures
Exports - partners:	 	US 17%, UAE 8.3%, China 7.7%, UK 4.3% (2006)
Imports:	  	\$224.1 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)
Imports - commodities:	 	crude oil, machinery, gems, fertilizer, chemicals
Imports - partners:	 	China 8.7%, US 6%, Germany 4.7%, Singapore 4.6% (2006)
Economic aid - recipient:	 	\$1.724 billion (2005)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:



\$239.4 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Debt - external:



\$165.4 billion (30 June 2007)

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:



\$67.72 billion (2006 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:



\$21.11 billion (2006 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:



\$818.9 billion (2006)

Currency (code):



Indian rupee (INR)

Exchange rates:



Indian rupees per US dollar - 41.487 (2007), 45.3 (2006), 44.101 (2005), 45.317 (2004), 46.583 (2003)

Fiscal year:



1 April - 31 March

Communications India

[Top of Page](#)

Telephones - main lines in use:



49.75 million (2005)

Telephones - mobile cellular:



166.1 million (2006)

Telephone system:



general assessment: recent deregulation and liberalization of telecommunications laws and policies have prompted rapid growth; local and long distance service provided throughout all regions of the country, with services primarily concentrated in the urban areas; steady improvement is taking place with the recent admission of private and private-public investors, but combined fixed and mobile telephone density remains low at about 20 for each 100 persons nationwide and much lower for persons in rural areas; fastest growth is in cellular service with modest growth in fixed lines

domestic: mobile cellular service (both CDMA and GSM) introduced in 1994 and organized nationwide into four metropolitan areas and 19 telecom circles each with about three private service providers and one state-owned service provider; in recent years significant trunk capacity added in the form of fiber-optic cable and one of the world's largest

domestic satellite systems, the Indian National Satellite system (INSAT), with 6 satellites supporting 33,000 very small aperture terminals (VSAT)

international: country code - 91; a number of major international submarine cable systems, including Sea-Me-We-3 with landing sites at Cochin and Mumbai (Bombay), Sea-Me-We-4 with a landing site at Chennai, Fiber-Optic Link Around the Globe (FLAG) with a landing site at Mumbai (Bombay), South Africa - Far East (SAFE) with a landing site at Cochin, the i2i cable network linking to Singapore with landing sites at Mumbai (Bombay) and Chennai (Madras), and Tata Indicom linking Singapore and Chennai (Madras), provide a significant increase in the bandwidth available for both voice and data traffic; satellite earth stations - 8 Intelsat (Indian Ocean) and 1 Inmarsat (Indian Ocean region); 9 gateway exchanges operating from Mumbai (Bombay), New Delhi, Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai (Madras), Jalandhar, Kanpur, Gandhinagar, Hyderabad, and Ernakulam

Radio broadcast stations:



AM 153, FM 91, shortwave 68 (1998)

Television broadcast stations:



562 (1997)

Internet country code:



.in

Internet hosts:



2.306 million (2007)

Internet users:



60 million (2005)

Transportation India

Top of Page

Airports:



346 (2007)

Airports - with paved runways:



total: 250
over 3,047 m: 18
2,438 to 3,047 m: 52
1,524 to 2,437 m: 75
914 to 1,523 m: 84
under 914 m: 21 (2007)



Airports - with unpaved runways:









total: 96
over 3,047 m: 1




2,438 to 3,047 m: 1
1,524 to 2,437 m: 7
914 to 1,523 m: 40
under 914 m: 47 (2007)




Heliports:  
30 (2007)



Pipelines:  
condensate/gas 9 km; gas 7,488 km; liquid petroleum gas 1,861 km;
oil 7,883 km; refined products 6,422 km (2007)

Railways:   
total: 63,221 km
broad gauge: 46,807 km 1.676-m gauge (17,343 km electrified)
narrow gauge: 13,290 km 1.000-m gauge (165 km electrified); 3,124
km 0.762-m gauge and 0.610-m gauge (2006)

Roadways:   
total: 3,383,344 km
paved: 1,603,705 km
unpaved: 1,779,639 km (2002)

Waterways:   
14,500 km
note: 5,200 km on major rivers and 485 km on canals suitable for
mechanized vessels (2006)

Merchant marine:   
total: 477 ships (1000 GRT or over) 8,350,093 GRT/14,339,440 DWT
by type: bulk carrier 101, cargo 220, chemical tanker 18, combination
ore/oil 1, container 9, liquefied gas 19, passenger 3, passenger/cargo
10, petroleum tanker 95, roll on/roll off 1
foreign-owned: 5 (China 1, Hong Kong 1, UAE 2, UK 1)
registered in other countries: 54 (Barbados 1, Comoros 2, Cyprus 1,
Dominica 2, North Korea 1, Liberia 2, Malta 3, Mauritius 2, Panama
25, Singapore 9, St Kitts and Nevis 1, St Vincent and The Grenadines
5, unknown 2) (2007)

Ports and terminals:  
Chennai, Haldia, Jawaharal Nehru, Kandla, Kolkata (Calcutta),
Mormugao, Mumbai (Bombay), New Mangalore, Vishakhapatnam

Military

India

Top of Page

Military branches:  

Army, Navy (includes naval air arm), Air Force, Coast Guard, various
security or paramilitary forces (includes Border Security Force, Assam

Rifles, National Security Guards, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Special Frontier Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Railway Protection Force, and Defense Security Corps)

Military service age and obligation:



16 years of age for voluntary military service (2001)

Manpower available for military service:



males age 16-49: 287,551,111
females age 16-49: 268,524,835 (2005 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:



males age 16-49: 219,471,999
females age 16-49: 209,917,553 (2005 est.)

Manpower reaching military service age annually:



males age 18-49: 11,446,452
females age 16-49: 10,665,877 (2005 est.)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP:



2.5% (2006)

Transnational Issues

India

Top of Page

Disputes - international:



since China and India launched a security and foreign policy dialogue in 2005, consolidated discussions related to the dispute over most of their rugged, militarized boundary, regional nuclear proliferation, Indian claims that China transferred missiles to Pakistan, and other matters continue; various talks and confidence-building measures have cautiously begun to defuse tensions over Kashmir, particularly since the October 2005 earthquake in the region; Kashmir nevertheless remains the site of the world's largest and most militarized territorial dispute with portions under the de facto administration of China (Aksai Chin), India (Jammu and Kashmir), and Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas); India and Pakistan have maintained the 2004 cease fire in Kashmir and initiated discussions on defusing the armed stand-off in the Siachen glacier region; Pakistan protests India's fencing the highly militarized Line of Control and construction of the Baglihar Dam on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir, which is part of the larger dispute on water sharing of the Indus River and its tributaries; UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) has maintained a small group of peacekeepers since 1949; India does not recognize Pakistan's ceding historic Kashmir lands to China in 1964; to defuse tensions and prepare for discussions on a maritime boundary, India and Pakistan seek technical resolution

of the disputed boundary in Sir Creek estuary at the mouth of the Rann of Kutch in the Arabian Sea; Pakistani maps continue to show its Junagadh claim in Indian Gujarat State; discussions with Bangladesh remain stalled to delimit a small section of river boundary, to exchange territory for 51 Bangladeshi exclaves in India and 111 Indian exclaves in Bangladesh, to allocate divided villages, and to stop illegal cross-border trade, migration, violence, and transit of terrorists through the porous border; Bangladesh protests India's attempts to fence off high-traffic sections of the border; dispute with Bangladesh over New Moore/South Talpatty/Purbasha Island in the Bay of Bengal deters maritime boundary delimitation; India seeks cooperation from Bhutan and Burma to keep Indian Nagaland and Assam separatists from hiding in remote areas along the borders; Joint Border Committee with Nepal continues to examine contested boundary sections, including the 400 square kilometer dispute over the source of the Kalapani River; India maintains a strict border regime to keep out Maoist insurgents and control illegal cross-border activities from Nepal

Refugees and internally displaced persons:



refugees (country of origin): 77,200 (Tibet/China), 50,730 (Sri Lanka), 9,700 (Afghanistan)
IDPs: at least 600,000 (about half are Kashmiri Pandits from Jammu and Kashmir) (2006)



Trafficking in persons:



current situation: India is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced or bonded labor and commercial sexual exploitation; the large population of men, women, and children - numbering in the millions - in debt bondage face involuntary servitude in brick kilns, rice mills, and embroidery factories, while some children endure involuntary servitude as domestic servants; internal trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage also occurs; the government estimates that 90 percent of India's sex trafficking is internal; India is also a destination for women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation; boys from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are trafficked through India to the Gulf states for involuntary servitude as child camel jockeys; Indian men and women migrate willingly to the Persian Gulf region for work as domestic servants and low-skilled laborers, but some later find themselves in situations of involuntary servitude including extended working hours, nonpayment of wages, restrictions on their movement by withholding of their passports or confinement to the home, and physical or sexual abuse

tier rating: Tier 2 Watch List - India has been on the Tier 2 Watch List since 2004 for its failure to show evidence of increasing efforts to

address trafficking in persons

Illicit drugs:  

world's largest producer of licit opium for the pharmaceutical trade, but an undetermined quantity of opium is diverted to illicit international drug markets; transit point for illicit narcotics produced in neighboring countries; illicit producer of methaqualone; vulnerable to narcotics money laundering through the hawala system; licit ketamine and precursor production