

NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE TOURIST POLICE

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Delhi Tourist Police officers at India Gate. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Crimes against tourists and other foreign nationals appear to be on the rise in India. Consider several recent cases, and the lessons they suggest. A few days ago, a Kerala session court [sentenced two men to life imprisonment](#) for the [rape and murder of a Latvian tourist](#) in 2018. A 12-year-old Russian girl was raped in a hotel in Goa on April 6 this year. The rapist was an employee of the hotel in which the girl was staying with her mother.

An Iraqi couple staying at a hotel in Gurugram for the treatment of the husband in the Medanta hospital was accosted by two miscreants posing as policemen on October 23. They accused the couple of carrying drugs and on the pretext of checking their wallets, fled with \$15,000 the couple had saved for the treatment.

On September 2, a British woman lawyer lodged a complaint of sexual misconduct against a cab driver who was ferrying her from the airport to her hotel in South Delhi. The incident traumatised her to the extent that she left for the U.K. within two days of her arrival.

These are just a few incidents of foreigners falling victim to crimes in our country. Women are more prone to sexual attacks by criminals on the prowl in tourist destinations. For every crime committed against foreigners, there would be several others that go unreported for multifarious reasons, with one of them being the fear instilled in them by the threats of these criminals. In the South Delhi incident, the British national was reluctant to lodge a formal complaint out of fear.

According to data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Delhi recorded 27 cases of crime against foreigners last year, a drastic decline from 62 cases reported in 2020 and 123 in 2019. Rajasthan has shown a sharp reduction in registration of crimes from 16 in 2019 to just 4 in 2020 and two cases last year, which could be attributed to the sharp decline in tourist arrivals due to COVID-19.

As many as 29 foreigners were murdered in the last three years. While 14 foreigners fell victim to rape last year, 16 were raped in 2020 and 12 in 2019. As many as 15 cases of assault to outraging modesty of foreign women were registered last year across the country, apart from 14 complaints of cheating. While 142 cases of theft were lodged by foreigners in 2019, it declined to

52 in 2020 and further dipped to 23 in 2021.

Crime against foreigners not only dents our image globally but could also adversely affect the inflow of foreign tourists, which is a vital source of income for our country. Tourism happens to be one of the biggest foreign exchange earners for India and constant effort needs to be made to raise earnings. While India's earnings through tourism was \$30.06 billion in 2019, it declined to \$6.958 billion in 2020 due to COVID-19 and the resultant restrictions in foreign tourists entering the country. A marginal increase of \$8.797 billion was recorded last year.

With optimistic predictions of about 13.34 million foreign tourists arriving by 2024, there is a pressing need to upgrade our security systems specially to provide a flawless security blanket cover to foreign tourists. Safety assumes utmost importance to draw tourists in hordes. .

In order to provide a safe environment for tourists, the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), organised a conference in New Delhi on October 19, 2022. It was organised with a view to "sensitise the specific requirements of the tourists for effective implementation of Uniform Tourist Police Scheme at pan-India level".

Also read | [Tourist Police officers barely have any time for visitors](#)

Though the concept of 'tourist police' has been in vogue for the past few years, it has not been given the kind of attention it deserves. The States that have tourist police are Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Rajasthan and Kerala.

In view of the forthcoming G20 Summit, the Delhi police is gearing up its tourist police wing, which was hitherto in a neglected state and so are other States which will see a huge influx of foreigners.

The BPRD has brought out a booklet on the tourist police scheme detailing the mode of setting up of tourist police stations and control rooms, outposts, uniforms, recruitment, qualifications, training and logistics requirements for tourist police stations. As many as 25 popular tourist spots have been identified in the country where the tourist police necessarily need to be deployed to help foreigners. As an incentive, 30% deputation allowance has been recommended for the police personnel who joins the tourist police on deputation.

While the setting up of tourist police stations is a commendable step to provide safety to foreigners, much needs to be done to instil a sense of security in them even before they leave their countries for India. With theft being the most common crime committed against foreigners, all criminals in and around tourist spots need to be identified and kept under constant surveillance.

Since foreigners come for short durations, the cases cannot be allowed to linger on in courts for long. Fast track courts should be set up immediately to try cases of crime against foreigners and the culprits punished speedily. It may be recalled that a rape convict, Bitihotra Mohanty, was tried for raping a German national in Alwar (Rajasthan) on March 21, 2006 and he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment on April 12, that is, within 22 days.

Such speedy disposal of cases of crime against foreigners can be replicated if we have the will.

(M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd.), CRPF)

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