

ACS BRIEF



American Citizen Services Newsletter

April 2015

From the Ambassador

In this edition of the quarterly ACS newsletter, I have been asked to write a few words to introduce myself to you, my fellow citizens in Bangladesh, as the new U.S. Ambassador. I met some of you at the town hall meeting we held a few weeks ago and look forward to continuing to engage with you regularly during my tenure as U.S. Ambassador. I want to assure each of you that the United States government and our Embassy have no higher obligation than to protect and serve U.S. citizens living abroad. The Embassy is always available to provide services and provide you the information you need to live and travel safely and securely in Bangladesh.

During my short time here, I have come to take pride in the wide array of services provided to U.S. citizens in Bangladesh by our Consular Section, specifically the American Citizen Services (ACS) office. I know the ACS staff work hard to reach out to the private U.S. citizen community to share information through newsletters, town hall meetings, warden messages, direct emails to and from the Embassy, and consular visits outside Dhaka. This year so far has been more challenging to arrange outreach efforts, but the Embassy continues to work to connect with you and by doing so, build new bridges with Bangladesh. Government-to-government ties are important, but they play a supporting role for something even more impressive – the strong and organic people-to-people ties that continue to lead and define the U.S. Bangladesh relationship. The role of private U.S. citizens in building those relationships with Bangladesh is also important whether it is through work an NGO or your own private business or simply taking a vacation to Cox's Bazar or the Sundarbans. With a Bangladesh diaspora half a million strong living in every corner of the United States, hundreds of thousands of other Bangladeshis who have studied or lived in the United States, and the growing number of Americans who visit or live in Bangladesh, it is the people of our two countries who are, more than ever, driving our relations forward.

The Embassy is here to help in those ways that we can, and our ACS unit remains your first point of contact with the Embassy. We look forward to seeing you.



Ambassador
Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat

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Your Stay in Bangladesh

Whether you are visiting Bangladesh for the first time or have been living here for many years, the Embassy wants to make sure you are informed, that you are keeping yourself protected and are respectful of Bangladeshi law as it relates to your immigration status in Bangladesh.

First, we encourage all U.S. citizens in Bangladesh to enroll with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (details below) so you can receive updates on safety and security, any changes to the Embassy's hours of operation, or information on issues relevant to U.S. Citizens overseas. Most importantly, enrollment can potentially help the Embassy connect with you in an emergency situation.

Secondly, visitors to Bangladesh should be aware of the expiry date and number of available visa pages of your passport. Some countries (including many in this region such as Thailand and Singapore) will not issue a visa or permit travel to a passport holder that that does not have at least six-months remaining validity in their passport. To renew your passport or to add visa pages you will need to make an appointment online at dhaka.usembassy.gov.

Naturalized U.S. citizens who are originally from Bangladesh, may be eligible to receive No-Visa Required (for travel to Bangladesh) stamps in their U.S. passports from the Immigration and Passport Office in Bangladesh. Please visit their website for more information: www.dip.gov.bd.

Finally, if your passport has been lost or stolen, you should immediately notify the local authorities in Bangladesh as well as the Embassy. In many cases, ACS can help you obtain a replacement passport so as not to interrupt your travels.

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service for U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you and your family are not already enrolled, please visit <https://step.state.gov/step/> to learn more.



My child is a minor (under 16 years of age). What should I do to prepare to renew his/her passport?

Parent (s) of U.S. citizen children (under 16 years of age) who wish to renew the child's passport should prepare the following after making an appointment at the Embassy:

- Complete the online passport application form [DS-11](#) and bring a printout of the completed application to the interview
- Proof of the child's U.S. Citizenship (that includes both parents' names)
- Child's current U.S. passport, valid or expired
- Child's social security number
- Photo identification for both parents (if a passport or ID card, the document should be valid)
- If applicable, signed and notarized statement of consent ([DS-3053](#)) or completed Statement of Exigent/Special Circumstance ([DS-5525](#)).
- One photograph for the application. For passport photo requirements, please visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html>
- Age progression photographs exhibiting your child's growth from the photograph in the

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previous passport to the present time. Please try to include at least one photo for each year of life.

- A consular officer may also request additional documents in support of your application at the time of your application submission.
- Children must appear in person, and both parents need to be present to provide consent to the passport issuance. Consent is given by both parents signing the application in front of the consular officer.
- In some unavoidable circumstances, one parent cannot be present at the interview. The non-present parent must submit a signed and notarized statement of consent ([DS-3053](#)) in order for the child to be issued a U.S. passport. The consent must be in the English language and can be notarized by any American notary or at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad.
- When only one parent can provide consent for the application, the applying parent must complete the form [DS-5525: Statement of Exigent/Special Circumstances](#). They should be prepared to supply any applicable legal or custody documents to support the explanation of circumstances.

Upcoming Special Election Deadlines

If you are a voter in the States of New York or Mississippi, please read below. Special elections are happening in two constituencies in **MAY**. If you plan to cast your ballot please visit the websites below for more information.

New York

The State of New York will conduct a special general election on Tuesday, May 5, 2015, for the 11th Congressional District in order to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Michael Grimm. This district consists of parts of Richmond County and Kings County. If you are a New York resident from the 11th Congressional District and need to vote absentee, you may register and request an absentee ballot using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) found at [FVAP.gov](#). Complete, sign and send the FPCA to your local election official who will send you a ballot once your request is received. If you are not currently registered, your request needs to be received by April 10; if you are currently registered, your request must be received by April 28. Detailed instructions and contact information is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/new-york>

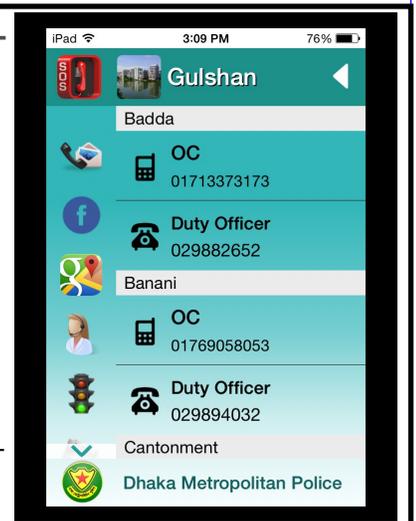
Mississippi

The State of Mississippi will conduct a special general election on Tuesday, May 12, 2015, for the 1st Congressional District in order to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Representative Alan Nunnelee. This district includes portions of DeSoto, Tate, Marshall, Lafayette, Calhoun, Benton, Tippah, Alcorn, Tishomingo, Prentiss, Lee, Union, Itawamba, Pontotoc, Chickasaw, Monroe, Clay, Lowndes, Webster, Choctaw, Oktibbeha and Winston counties. If you are a Mississippi resident from the 1st Congressional District and need to vote absentee, you may register and request an absentee ballot using the FPCA found at [www.fvap.gov](#). Complete, sign and send the FPCA to your local election official who will send you a ballot once your request is received. If you are not currently registered, your form needs to be received May 2, 2015, which will also allow you to participate in the potential runoff election set for Tuesday, June 2, 2015. Detailed instructions and contact information is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/mississippi>.

If you do not receive your requested State ballot 30 days before the election, you may use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot to vote. The form and candidate names are available at <http://www.fvap.gov/mississippi> under "Get My Ballot."

Dhaka Metropolitan Police develops communication tool:

There is a new way to connect with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police using an Android or iPhone device. The organization has developed an "app" that includes contact information and links to different department sections including traffic and media, connections to Police helplines by phone, maps, and more. If you are interested, you can go to the app stores on either your Android or iPhone device and search for "Dhaka Metropolitan Police." The application is available for free to download.



Reminders from American Citizen Services

Your Warden System

In order to assist in communications with U.S. citizens throughout Bangladesh, the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka utilizes a warden system. Warden systems are used worldwide to help disseminate information on safety, security, emergency and contingency planning for U.S. citizens living overseas. In recent years, regular communication from the Embassy has taken the form of email messages and SMS messages sent directly by the Embassy. However, in emergency situations, when regular communication systems might not be available, the Embassy would call on the wardens to contact U.S. citizens in their zone to determine that they are safe. Wardens in Bangladesh are U.S. citizens who have volunteered to assist the Embassy are briefed on the statutory requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 to keep citizens' personal information private.

They agree to the following provisions:

- A) That the information provided by the Embassy must be accorded the full protection of the Privacy Act. Access to information must be limited to authorized participants in the warden system.
- B) That storage and control of the information provided must be adequate to prevent access by unauthorized persons.
- C) That no dissemination of, or access to, the information provided by the U.S. Embassy shall be permitted except in accordance with duties as warden. Further, the information provided shall be returned to the Embassy upon completion of the tenure as a warden.

Each warden is assigned a "Warden Zone." The size of the zone depends both on the number of volunteers we have in an area and the number of Americans living in that zone. Bangladesh is currently divided into 12 zones (including 8 zones in Dhaka) with a designated warden (many zones also have a back-up warden). The Embassy provides contact information (names, phone numbers, and addresses) based on the registrants at post to the wardens for use in emergency or crisis situations. We advise that wardens report back to the Embassy any relevant information or concerns gathered from the residents in each zone. The Embassy has encouraged the wardens to reach out to individuals in their zones and introduce themselves. Please contact the Embassy if you have any questions about your zone or the warden.

Emergency services for U.S. citizens are available at all times. The U.S. Embassy Dhaka is located at Madani Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh 1212, and by telephone at (88) (02) 5566-2000 during regular business hours. If you are a U.S. citizen in need of immediate assistance, the emergency number for the U.S. Embassy is (88) (02) 5566-2000; for after-hours emergency services, please press "0" and ask for the duty officer. You may be asked to explain your emergency; this is to better direct your call.

Full versions of recent warden messages are available on our website:

<http://dhaka.usembassy.gov/msg.html>

