Terrorism is commonly defined as violent acts intended to create fear with the ultimate aim of meeting religious, political or ideological goals. Civilians are often targeted deliberately in such acts, which could, as we have seen in the recent past, take place anywhere: hotels, concert halls, airports, hospitals, restaurants. No place and no one are truly immune.

Terrorists explode bombs, fire rifles, throw hand-grenades, launch rockets, ransack houses, loot banks and establishments, destroy religious places, kidnap people, hijack buses and planes, indulge in arson and rape and do not spare even children. Consequently, the world is becoming a totally unsafe, insecure, dangerous and fearful place day by day. This ruthless chain of action and reaction, full of horrifying violence, is much too dangerous to be ignored or taken lightly. Terrorism is not only a threat to humanity but also to the growth of any developing country.

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Every country has an anti-terrorism policy in place, but what can you as an ordinary citizen do to prevent or protect yourself in a terror strike? We find that preparation and awareness can go some way in improving your chances of preventing or surviving a terror attack. With World Anti-Terrorism Day having been observed this May, it's a good time to spare some thought to the subject. Here's our list of must-know safety tips.

1. Encourage security awareness in your family and discuss what to do if there is a security threat.
2. Maintain situational awareness of your surroundings at all times. Pay attention to activity happening around you in order to identify anything unusual.
3. Protect your personal information. Do not reveal details of your personal life to strangers.
4. Be vigilant at public places, which are more vulnerable to bomb attacks. Keep an eye out for unattended packages or bags.
5. Make sure to memorize important emergency phone numbers that can help you reach the police and other security agencies in times of emergency.
6. Always report suspicious persons or movements within your neighbourhood to the police through available means of communication.
7. Keep your property secure and make sure that your premises don't contain objects that could allow criminals easier access -- say, a ladder against the wall.
8. Hotels and other hospitality establishments should always screen their guests properly and ensure that they obtain accurate details about them.

"Never agree to watch over or hold a stranger's bag no matter how nicely they ask."

Draw the attention of the police or other security agencies to vehicles parked or abandoned by suspicious persons.

9. Do not allow unknown persons to drop or abandon bags, boxes, cartons or any wrapped or sealed containers around your premises.

10. Never agree to hold or watch over any stranger's bag or belongings. It doesn't matter how nicely they ask.

11. Always listen to and monitor news reports on radio/TV channels. Do not take news bulletins lightly. Do not step out of the house if you come across news reports of a terror attack in your vicinity.

12. Do not travel into areas that are expected terrorist targets.

13. Be prepared to evacuate your home or shelter on the order of local authorities.

14. Know where emergency exits are located in buildings that you frequently visit. Plan how to get out if an emergency arises.

15. Make it a point to keep your mobile phone charged and topped up at all times. You don't want to be running out of phone charge or money in an emergency.

16. Rumors spread easily in such situations. Try to know the facts from reliable sources.

17. While travelling, instead of looking outside the window keep your eye under the seats for any suspicious stuff.

    The above tips are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to a terrorist incident.

    Stay alert. Stay secure.