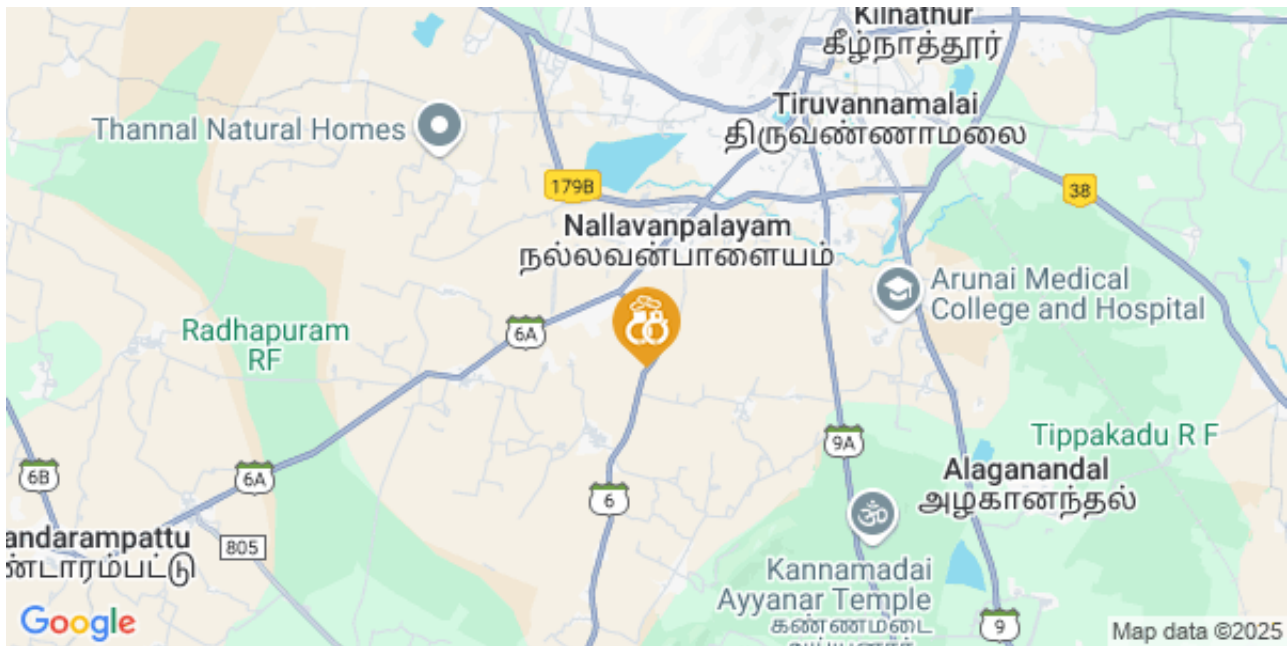


Crime



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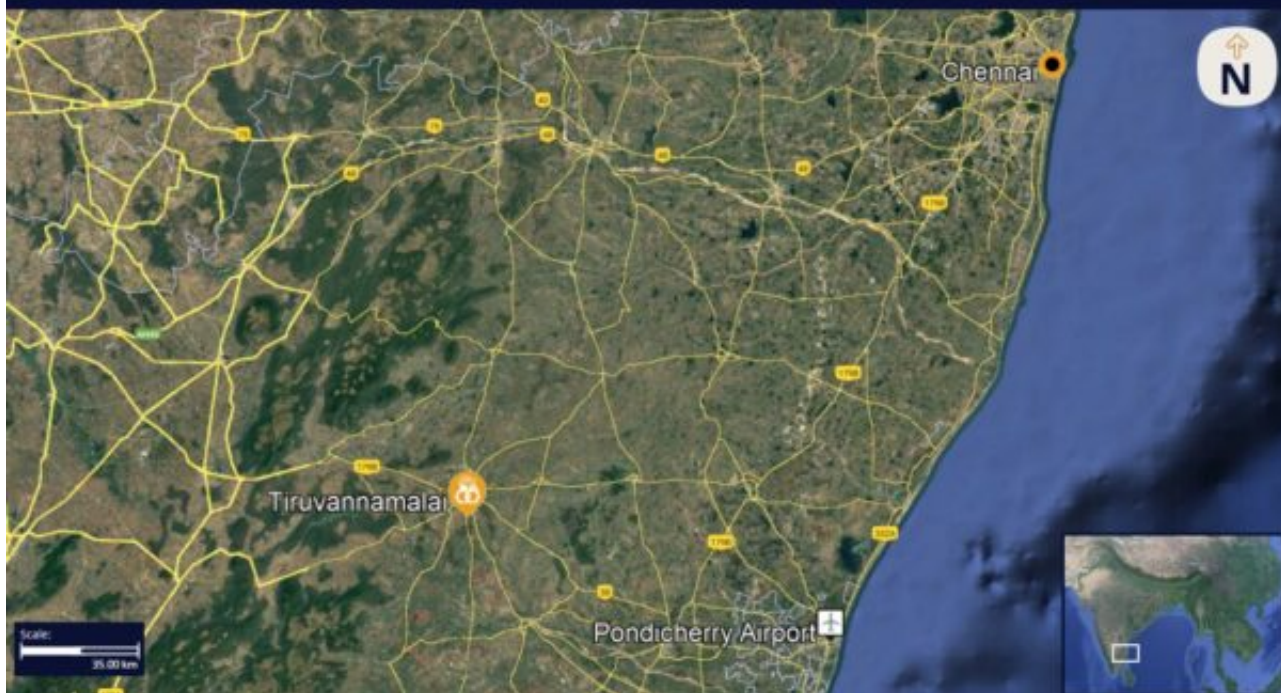
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India Alert: French national sexually assaulted by tour guide in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, per March 20 reports; heightened scrutiny amid string of similar incidents

Current Situation:

- The authorities reported that a private tour guide was arrested for sexually assaulting a French national at Tiruvannamalai's Arunachal Hill in Tamil Nadu, per March 20 reports.
- Following the incident, the victim informed the French Consulate in Chennai of the incident, who took the matter to local authorities leading to the arrest on March 19.
- The suspect was reportedly accompanying the woman since her arrival to India in January, as part of a spiritual tour.

LOCATION OF CRIMINAL INCIDENT IN TAMIL NADU



Source: [Times of India](#)

Assessments & Forecast:

1. The development speaks to the persistent risk of sexual assault to foreign nationals, particularly women, in the country. This is especially in areas outside of major cities, given that Tiruvannamalai is located approximately 195 km away from Chennai. This development is likely to escalate safety concerns in the area given Tiruvannamalai is a well-known temple town in Tamil Nadu, attracting higher numbers of foreign nationals. Moreover, the development also points to concerns regarding predatory behavior associated with religious and spiritual areas given that the incident took place when the accused allegedly used spiritual guidance as a luring tactic to isolate the victim.
2. This incident is likely to gain additional attention given that it is the third such incident this month wherein a foreign national was allegedly sexually assaulted. Other incidents include a [UK national](#) sexually assaulted in Delhi, per March 13 reports, and [two foreign nationals](#) sexually assaulted in Karnataka on March 6. Additionally, the involvement of a local guide in this incident will also heighten foreign nationals' concerns considering the high popularity of hiring local tour guides for travelers in India. As such, the incident underscores the need to use vetted guides, accommodations, and transport while travelling in India, especially in unfamiliar locations.
3. **FORECAST:** While tourism to Tiruvannamalai is expected to remain largely unaffected by the incident, given the city's spiritual resonance, heightened security, particularly near the vicinity of religious sites is anticipated. These measures are likely to include additional deployment of female officers, stricter checks of local workers accessing prominent meditation sites, and closer movement monitoring of foreign nationals registered at these centers for their safety to placate foreign nationals' concerns. Regarding bilateral relations, Paris is liable to raise this development with New Delhi over the safety of French nationals; however, this is unlikely to lead to a deterioration in bilateral ties. Media scrutiny regarding sexual assault of foreign nationals in India is also anticipated to be heightened in the coming term considering the string of multiple such incidents in recent weeks.

Recommendations:

1. Travel to India can continue while maintaining situational awareness and practicing basic precautions, such as only frequenting vetted establishments and limiting interaction with unknown individuals, due to the risk of crimes against foreigners.
2. Avoid nonessential travel to the country's remote areas, particularly after daytime. Those undertaking travel to such areas must inform the local authorities about their travel itineraries, have local contact information at hand, and not stay overnight due to the general lack of secure hotels in these locations.
3. Female travelers are advised against traveling alone after dark or unaccompanied outside major cities and are recommended to use vetted transportation from a reputable hotel or organization.