

MOSQUITOES AND SMOG

Before leaving for Calcutta, I had two main paranoias: mosquitoes and street congestion.

For mosquitoes I took with me: anti-malaria pills, a treated mosquito net, repellants (organic and chemical, and lots of vitamin B1) and anti-itch ointment. Arriving in Calcutta, the winter was colder than usual, and there were very few mosquitoes. My room at the RKM had an excellent net over the bed, but I chose not to use it. Bad idea, a mosky appeared in the wee hours and zinged around my ears. So I took to using the net, but invariably there would be a zinger inside it, sooner or later, every night. At the end of the first week, I had a couple dozen bites, mostly on the ankles and wrists. I tried using the organic repellent once, on my ankles, but it stained the bedsheet, so I discontinued using it. In the long run, the moskies continued, but the bites completely stopped. Must have been the vitamin B1.

For smog, I took a couple of dust masks. Traffic was very thick and the smog was bad, but mostly not bad enough to force me to put on a mask. Just one time, trapped in a halted truck convoy on a bridge over the Ganges, I was very happy to have a mask to put on.

=====