

## **Airport/Port and ground land border Health Organizations (APHOs/PHOs/Ground crossings Health units)**

### **Brief Background**

International spread of diseases and agents responsible for various diseases from one country to another is a well-established phenomenon. Accordingly, Health units were established at international airports and ports were established during 1950s under Indian Aircraft (Public Health) Rules as well as India Port Health Rules, primarily to keep vigil on 6 diseases of international significance during that time. Health arrangement at points of entry of international traffic is a statutory requirement.

These organizations are functioning since more than 6 decades and have saved the country for a number dangerous diseases like yellow fever, Ebola fever, Swine flu, SARS etc.. The role played by these Organizations during the plague outbreak, DHF and recent pandemic of swine flu is enough evidence about the utility of the units in the overall interest of the country. In the past also the roles played by APHOs and PHOs in preventing international spread of Plague in 1994, SARS in 2003 is well known. Apart from this, the units are involved in keeping constant vigil towards preventing the introduction of yellow fever into the country which is a dangerous disease with high mortality and morbidity rate, presently prevalent in around 41 countries of African and South American continents and there is all likelihood of this disease being imported to India through mosquitoes and human traffic.

Consequent upon adoption of new International Health Regulations by 65<sup>th</sup> WHA, many specific functions are mandated for events related to ALL Hazards approach.

Presently, the health units are functioning only at 21 Points of Entry i.e., 10 airports, 10 ports and one Land border (14 units are under non-plan scheme and 7 under non-plan scheme):

- Ten major ports:
  - Non-Plan - Mumbai, Kolkata, Kandla, Chennai, Cochin, Mandapam Camp, Marmagoa and Visakhapatnam.
  - Plan scheme: JNPT NavaSheva and Tuticorin
- Ten international airports:
  - Non-plan: Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Tiruchirapalli.
  - Plan scheme: Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Ahmedabad, and Trivandrum.
- One Border Quarantine Health unit at Land border of Amritsar.

There is shortage of all categories of manpower, infrastructure for quarantine at APHOs and essential equipment, proposal to strengthen the existing above mentioned POEs (health

units at 21 and establishment of quarantine centers at 9 APHO and Border crossings) and establishment of additional 23 APHO/PHO and BQC has been put up for financial support in the current plan period.

In the recent years, there has been manifold increase in the air traffic flow in India and all over the world. Simultaneously, during the last few decades, there has been emergence and re-emergence of a number of diseases, which have spread to many countries/continents through international travel and trade like SARS, Avian Influenza, Ebola Virus disease, influenza A H1N1 pandemic etc. Adoption of new IHR and development of core capacities at all designated POEs for all events (chemical, biological, radio-nuclear and food safety) having potential for international spread, occurring both inside country and those occurring outside. This has necessitated the need to expand the manpower for health measures and clearance facilities at major international ports and airports of the country which are experiencing heavy passenger loads to ensure that these diseases are not introduced and if introduced their spread can be contained effectively.

**These units are under the administrative control of DGHS (supported by one DDG, ADG, Director (A&V), DD (A&V), SO (PH&IH) and a small section with four support staff.**