

Port Health Organizations (PHOs 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 played a significant role in mitigation of risks due to a number of 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 65th WHA, many specific functions are mandated for events related to All Hazards approach.

The **International Health Regulations 2005** are legally binding regulations (forming International Law) that aim to a) assist countries to work together to save lives and livelihoods endangered by the spread of diseases and other health risks, and b) avoid unnecessary interference with international trade and travel. The purpose and scope of IHR 2005 are to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. (Article 2, IHR 2005). India has become IHR-2005 complaint in year 2016.

Presently, the health units are functioning only at 26 Points of Entry i.e., 11 airports, 12 ports and 3 Land Borders:

- A. Twelve major ports at Mumbai, Kolkata, Kandla, Chennai, Cochin, Mandapam Camp, Marmagoa, Visakhapatnam, JNPT Nava Sheva, Tuticorin, Paradip and Mangalore.
- B. Eleven international airports at Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Tiruchirapalli, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Ahmedabad, Calicut and Trivandrum.
- C. Three Integrated Check Post Health unit at Land border of Amritsar, Agartala and Petrapole.

Further, New Health Units at 22 International Points of Entry have been approved and are under process for strengthening (in terms of manpower, equipment, etc.), i.e., 18 Airports and 4 Land Borders:

- A. Eighteen international airports at Amritsar, Lucknow, Coimbatore, Varanasi, Goa, Jaipur, Nagpur, Pune, Srinagar, Gaya, Port Blair, Guwahati, Bagdogra, Patna, Mangalore, Imphal, Bhubaneshwar and Tirupati.
- B. Four Integrated Check Post Health unit at Land border of Raxaul, Jogbani, Moreh and Dawki.

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.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE PORT HEALTH ORGANIZATION (PHO):

- Inspection of ship/vessels (including sanitation and issuance of Ship sanitation control and Ship sanitation control Exemption certificate), baggage, cargo, containers, goods, postal parcels and human remains from departing and arriving ships/vessels, so that they are maintained in such a condition that they are free of sources of infection or contamination, including vectors and reservoirs;
- Health screening and medical examination of travellers for yellow fever disease.
- Supervision and coordination of measures so that facilities used by travellers at points of entry are maintained in a sanitary condition and are kept free of sources of infection or contamination, including vectors and reservoirs;
- Responsible for the supervision of any deratting, disinfection, disinsection or decontamination of baggage, cargo, containers, conveyances, goods, postal parcels and human remains or sanitary measures for persons, as appropriate under these Rules;
- Advise conveyance operators, as far in advance as possible, of their intent to apply control measures to a conveyance, and shall provide, where available, written information concerning the methods to be employed;
- Responsible for the supervision of the removal and safe disposal of any contaminated water or food, human or animal waste, waste water and any other contaminated matter from a conveyance;
- Take all practicable measures consistent with the Indian Port Health Rules, to monitor and control the discharge by ships of sewage, refuse, ballast water and other potentially disease-causing matter which might contaminate the waters of a port, river, canal, strait, lake or other international waterway;
- Responsible for supervision of service providers for services concerning travellers, baggage, cargo, containers, conveyances, goods, postal parcels and human remains at points of entry, including the conduct of inspections and medical examinations as necessary;
- Have effective contingency arrangements to deal with an unexpected PHEIC and the measures to deal with it to all the concerned agencies at the port;
- Responsible for coordinating additional health measures at the port as decided by the Central Government in the event of PHEIC like passenger screening, isolation & quarantine, contact listing, aircraft disinsection, transportation, arranging logistics for various public health measures etc.
 - . Implementation of Indian Port Health Rules.
 - . Implementation of the International Health Regulations, 2005.
 - . Implementation of the Merchant Shipping Act.
- Implementation of Food Safety and Standard Act,(FSSA)-2006 & Food Safety and Standards (Packing and labelling Regulations, (FSSR)-2011 by assisting the Customs department for clearance of imported food and acting as Local Health Authority for Food catering Units in Local Port Areas.

The List containing Port Health Organization and Port Health Office is as under:

S.No	Name and Address	Telephone/Fax	E-mail address
1	Port Health Officer Port Health Organization Kandla Port, New Kandla Kutch District, Gujarat-370210	02836-270220(Tel) 02836-270189 (Fax)	phokandla@gmail.com
2	Port Health Officer Port Health Organization No. B-20, World Trade Avenue New Harbour, Tuticorin- 628004 Tamil Nadu	0461-2353341(Tel) 0461-2353314(Fax)	photuticorin@gmail.com
3	Port Health Officer Port Health Organization Port Area, Visakhapatnam-35 Andhra Pradesh	0891-2565681(Tel) 0891-2562681(Fax)	phovizagport@yahoo.com
4	Port Health Officer Port Health Organization Marine House, Kolkata- 700022	033-22230414 033-22230178(Tel) 033-22230904 (Fax) 033-22230435 (Fax)	phokolkata@rediffmail.com drmkbag28@gmail.com
5	Port Health Officer Port Health Organisation Marmagoa Harbour, Goa-403803	0832-2520292 0832-2521886(Tel) 0832-2520292 (Fax)	phogoa@gmail.com pho-mhfw.goa@nic.in
6	Port Health Officer Port Health Organisation Willingdon Island Cochin-682009	0484-2666060(Tel) 0484-2666024 (Fax)	phocochin@yahoo.co.in drshyamini@gmail.com
7	Port Health Officer Port Health Organisation Pattan Swasthya Bhawan 7, Mandalik Road, Mumbai-400001	022-22020027 022-22027101(Tel) 022-22020814(Fax)	phomumbai@mtnl.net.in
8	Port Health Officer, Port Health Organisation, Rajaji Salai, Chennai- 600001	044-25243939(Tel) 044-25225858 (Fax)	quarantinechennai@yahoo.com
9	Port Health Officer, Port Health Organisation, JNPT, P.O.C. Building, Sheva, Navi Mumbai-400707	022- 27241373(Tel) 022-27242592(Fax)	phonhevasheva@gmail.com
10	Port Health Officer, Port Health Organization, Near KIOCI Limited, Kuloor, Mangaluru, Karnataka 575006		jasonmathewkurian@gmail.com
11	Port Health Officer, Port Health Organization,	0674-2431708 (Tel)	rohfwbbs@rediffmail.com

	Paradip. (Managed by ROHFW, Bhubaneshwar, Sr. Regional Director, Regional Office for H & F.W., BJ-25, BJB Nagar, BHUBANESWAR-751014.)	0674-2431904 (Fax)	
12	Port Health Officer, Port Health Organization, New Mangalore Port. (Managed by PHO Cochin, Port Health Organisation, Willingdon Island, Cochin-682009)	0484-2666060 (Tel) 0484-2666024 (Fax)	phocochin@yahoo.co.in