

Who is permitted to enter various zones in an airport in India?

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In news– The controversy over two BJP MPs entering the air traffic control (ATC) room at Jharkhand's Deoghar airport has raised questions over who can and cannot enter various zones in an airport.

What is the ATC in an airport?

- **It is the traffic control room for aircraft at airports** and in certain designated airspaces, from where ground-based air traffic controllers direct aircraft movements. The **controllers use equipment including radar to track aircraft**, and **communicate with pilots over radio**. The ATC complex typically has a tower, which may be attached to a building.
- The **primary purpose of the ATC system is to prevent a collision between aircraft** operating in the system and to organize and expedite the flow of (air) traffic.
- Under certain circumstances, the ATC may have security or defence responsibilities as well, and may be manned by military officers.

Who is permitted to enter an airport in India?

- **A person who is not a passenger with a valid ticket requires an Aerodrome Entry Permit (AEP)** that is **issued by the airport operator in** concurrence with the security agency in charge of the airport.
- Typically, at the bigger airports, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) undertakes the security responsibilities, while at a smaller airport like Deoghar, it is the state police that manages security.

- However, **it does automatically permit a person to enter ATC; prior approval is needed to enter the ATC building.**
- The **AEP application form, which is issued by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)**, mentions 13 zones that a person can potentially enter. Among them are the arrivals hall, the departures hall, the terminal building, the security hold area, the apron area, the ATC building, the ATC tower, the cargo terminal building, etc.
- However, **the access authorisations are granted on a 'need' basis.** For example, airline ground staff, who may have authorisation to enter the arrivals hall, the departures hall, the terminal building, and the security hold area, may not necessarily be authorised to enter the ATC tower or the ATC building.

Does a Member of Parliament have special privileges to enter airport premises?

- An order issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in October 2007 on the subject "Courtesy towards Members of Parliament at Airports" said a "**Member of Parliament may be allowed free access in the Terminal building** and Visitors Gallery on the basis of MPs Identity Card".
- However, **the order did not state whether MPs were allowed to also enter ATC premises.** The same order was circulated again by the Civil Aviation Ministry in January 2020.