

Mumbai airport to shut cargo flights for 10 mths from Aug

DEEPAK PATEL

New Delhi, 18 December

Mumbai airport, India's second-largest in terms of air cargo handled, will suspend freighter flights from August 2026 to May 2027 as it has to recarpet its main runway, build a new taxiway, and rebuild the apron area where cargo planes load and unload, *Business Standard* has learnt.

In 2024-25, the airport handled 890,000 tonnes of cargo, accounting for nearly a quarter of India's total air cargo handled that year.

Adani Group-led Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL), which operates the airport in the financial capital, informed aviation stakeholders on December 11 in a letter that it had "thoroughly explored" all possible alternatives to maintain freighter operations, but given the "operational limitations", the temporary suspension of all cargo flights during the stated period is "unavoidable".

This is not the first time MIAL has moved to suspend cargo operations at the airport. In April, it had told cargo operators that dedicated freighter flights would be stopped from August 16 until further notice, citing airside infrastructure works and acute capacity constraints. The announcement had sparked strong resistance from cargo carriers and industry bodies, who had warned that shutting out freighters would weaken Mumbai's position as a critical aviation and logistics hub. Facing the backlash, MIAL had reversed course in May, rolling back the April decision.

In its latest letter, MIAL stated: "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) is among the most land-constrained airports globally and the only single-runway airport handling over 55 million passengers annually. To ensure business continuity and future capacity enhancement, we continuously invest in infrastructure development aligned with stakeholder needs and long-term growth objectives."

The main runway (Runway 09/27) will be "re-carpeted" in the foreseeable future, meaning it will be closed for most of the day, MIAL said. To help planes move safely during this period, the airport plans to build Taxiway E, running parallel to the second runway (Runway 14/32), so planes won't have to cross the active runway.

"Once commissioned, this taxiway will significantly improve the capacity of Runway 14/32, bringing it in line with Runway 09/27. This project will also require demolition of existing cargo infrastructure," it stated.

Apron G, the only area where cargo planes park, is worn out and will also be completely rebuilt, it said. The area will also be shut between August 2026 and May 2027.

"Since freighter operations are exclusively handled on Apron 'G', and no alternative apron is feasible due to continuous passenger flight operations and space constraints, we regret to inform you that filter operations cannot be accommodated during this interim period," it mentioned.

Navi Mumbai airport, the city's second airport being developed by MIAL's subsidiary, is scheduled to commence flight operations this month. The Mumbai airport currently handles about seven to eight cargo flight departures per day.

Freight facts

- During the renovation period, MIAL aims to build a new taxiway and rebuild the apron area where cargo planes load and unload
- In 2024-25, Mumbai airport handled 890,000 tonnes of cargo
- In April, the decision had faced strong resistance from cargo carriers and industry bodies