

## Cox's Bazar Airport loses int'l status days after recognition

- A Monitor Report

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Cox's Bazar : The government has withdrawn the recently issued notification that granted Cox's Bazar Airport international status, only 14 days after it was declared an international airport.

A new circular revoking the earlier decision was issued on October 26. The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism had originally made the declaration on October 12.

The reasons behind the sudden reversal remain unclear, though sources indicate that Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus gave a verbal instruction to halt the move last Thursday.

Plans to upgrade Cox's Bazar Airport have been underway since 2021, when then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the project and inaugurated work to extend the runway. The runway has since been

expanded from 6,775 feet to 9,000 feet, but the new terminal building, covering about 11,000 square feet, is still incomplete.

Professor Yunus inspected the site in March this year. Despite its recent international designation, no airlines - domestic or foreign - had shown interest in launching overseas flights from Cox's Bazar. Industry insiders said, routes from Chattogram and Sylhet to destinations such as the Middle East and the UK are considered more commercially viable.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines had reportedly been preparing to start flights on the Cox's Bazar-Dhaka-Kolkata route in October. However, the suspension of the airport's international status came before those plans could proceed.