

AAI officer files PIL over building height 'violations' near Mumbai airport

The petitioner cited reports which said that between 2012 and 2017, over 300 new "obstacles" had come up around the airport.

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MUMBAI: A senior Airport Authority of India (AAI) officer and "whistle-blower" has filed a criminal public interest litigation (PIL), seeking that a special investigation team (SIT) be set up to probe

violations of air safety norms around [Mumbai airport](#) as well as alleged corruption in permissions granted for tall buildings near the sensitive zone.

The petitioner cited reports which said that between 2012 and 2017, over 300 new "obstacles" had come up around the airport.

The petitioner, S Mangala, is currently deputy general manager (aviation safety) and was earlier DGM (air traffic control-NOC). In her petition, she called herself a "whistle-blower" and a subject expert on both illegal NOCs granted for height of buildings as well as violations of air safety rules and procedures.

Along with a SIT probe, the petitioner has also sought implementation of safety recommendations at the airport. Pending hearing of the case, she has requested the court to reduce the declared distance of the runway at Mumbai

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airport based on nearby obstacles and challenged the legality of the Appellate Committee of Height clearances too.

The petitioner has further asked that work at the new Navi Mumbai airport be stopped till a study of the obstacles are carried out and such structures are demolished to ensure safety.

Mangala, who is appearing in person, mentioned before a division bench of Justice Satyaranjan Dharmadhikari and Justice Prakash Naik on Tuesday that she had filed a criminal PIL. The court was hearing arguments in another PIL filed by advocate Yeshwant Shenoy, seeking action against officers of AAI who had allowed increase in building heights around the airport.

Mangala, in her PIL, alleged that top officials of the AAI, directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA), ministry of civil aviation and other airport authorities have colluded with builders and real estate brokers to permit excess height to buildings around the airport. She said the CBI had failed to act, though she had submitted evidence to them.

In case of an accident, she expressed fears that it would not only lead to loss of lives of passengers but also residents of buildings near the airport.

She also referred to a passenger flight in September 2017 that overshot the main runway at Mumbai airport and came to a stop after its wheels had sunk in the soft strip.

She said in case the aircraft had landed from the opposite direction, due to the lack of soft strip on that side, disastrous consequences could have followed.

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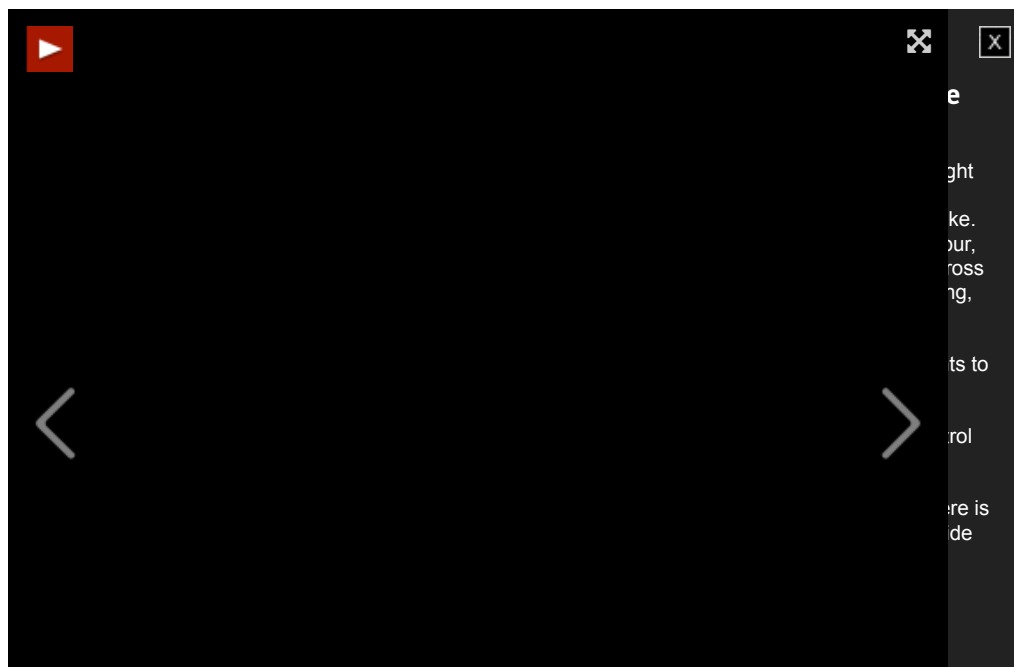


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