

## BD aims to build strong air network with neighbouring countries

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**Dhaka:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has inducted the brand-new Dash 8-400 aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, expressing her conviction to establish a strong regional connectivity cashing in on the country's geographical location in Southeast Asia.

"We want to establish strong connectivity with neighbouring countries working on this goal and I think this inclusion (aircraft) of Biman will be helpful in future," she said.

The premier joined the induction ceremony at the VIP Lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport virtually from her official residence Ganabhaban on December 27.

Noting that effective connectivity is required for trade and business, she said Bangladesh can easily establish a strong and effective connectivity with the Southeastern countries due to its geographical location and that is why the government has taken different measures to this end.

The Prime Minister said the Awami League government in its first tenure in 1996 had upgraded the Chattogram and Sylhet airports as international ones while developed the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport massively.

"Now, we are upgrading Cox's Bazar and Saidpur airports as international ones

while construction works of the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and expansion of Sylhet international airport is going on, and the remaining work will be done gradually," she said.

Emphasising Bangladesh's 'excellent' geographical location in South Asia, she added, "If we can establish good communication links with the countries around us, it would help us grow in all aspects, including business and trade."

Sheikh Hasina named the Dash 8-400 aircraft as "Dhrubotara" mentioning that other brand new aircraft included by her government has been named as Palki, Arun Alo, Akash Pradip, Raanga Pravat, Meghdoot, Mayurpankhi, Akash Beena, Hongshobalaka, Gangchil, Achin Pakhi, and Sonar Tori in accordance with the country's nature.

"I have selected these names and my younger sister Sheikh Rehana helped me in it," she added.

State minister for civil aviation and tourism Md Mahbub Ali delivered the welcome speech from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport end while Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Ahmad Kaikaus conducted the ceremony at Ganabhaban. The Prime Minister also inaugurated 20 newly built fire service stations in different places, six regional passport offices, women central jail in Keraniganj, and an LPG station for jail.

Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan also gave a welcome speech at the ceremony. The Dhrubotara

Earlier, the national flag carrier received the first Dash 8-400 aircraft out of three made by De Havilland Aircraft of Canada, a prominent aircraft-maker of the North American country.

Bangladesh purchased three Dash 8-400 aircraft from Canada under a G2G agreement, with Dhrubatara (North Star), named by the prime minister herself, being the first to arrive.

"The North Star helps with navigation. We are celebrating the Father of the Nation's birth centenary in 2020 while 2021 will be the golden jubilee of our independence.

Therefore, I have chosen the name with these things in mind," said the Premier.

In February, two more Dash 8 jets will be added to the fleet while the government has undertaken plans to revamp and modernize the country's airports, according to Hasina.

"I believe the air links with other countries will be useful in the future."

The Dash 8-400 aircraft, equipped with eco-friendly and state-of-the-art facilities, arrived here on November 24.

With the addition of the new Dash plane, the number of Biman's aircraft has been raised to 19, including four Boeing 777-300ER, four Boeing 787-8, two Boeing 787-9, six Boeing 737 and three Dash 8-400.