

Biman Board seeks comparative study on Boeing, Airbus before new purchase

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Dhaka : Biman Bangladesh Airlines' Board of Directors at a meeting on May 28 asked for a comparative study on the US-based Boeing and Europe-based Airbus as the national flag carrier's top executives came up with proposals to purchase new aircraft. "We presented both proposals that we received from Boeing and Airbus.

We have been asked to look into which one is more profitable for us in the long run and present the findings at the next board meeting," Shafiul Azim, Managing Director and CEO, Biman Bangladesh, said this to the media after the meeting.

"We are talking to both companies, but still we are not in the position of making a final decision," he added. The Managing Director further said, as per reports, that Boeing, in a recent letter to the Biman Chairman, has asked Biman to buy four aircraft, including B787-9 and B787-10. If

Biman agrees to the proposal, Boeing will also supply freighter planes to Bangladesh.

"In fact, Boeing has always been connected with us and it had some proposals before the latest one. The US-based company is also interested in providing technical support and training to Biman," the MD and CEO added. Earlier, the Biman board decided to purchase 10 wide-body Airbus aircraft, including two cargo and eight passenger planes. An agreement was signed between the UK Government and Bangladesh over the airbus purchase during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to London.

Mixed fleet issues

Currently, Biman has 21 aircraft, mostly dominated by Boeing. No Airbus aircraft exists in Biman's fleet. After Biman Board of Directors on May 3 approved in principle to purchase 10 aircraft from the European plane maker Airbus, US aircraft manufacturing company Boeing held a press conference in the capital on May 10.



David Schulte

After the press conference, David Schulte, Managing Director (Commercial Marketing) for Asia Pacific and India, Boeing, while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor, said, Biman should keep its fleet and operations simple as well as the cost down by using Boeing planes only.

He said, including Airbus planes in Biman's fleet will increase the flag carrier's expenses due to different types of spare parts, tooling, engine spares, and pilot training requirements.

David further noted, since Biman has a small fleet of 21 planes. He said buying 10 Boeing 787s is the simple solution and buying five Boeing 787s and five Airbus A350s is the complex solution. He claimed that a complex fleet costs more.

Biman now has four Boeing 777-300 ERs, four Boeing 787-8s, two Boeing 787-9s, six Boeing 737-800s, and five De Havilland Canada Dash-8 Q400.

"Boeing planes have played a tremendous role in the rapid growth of commercial aviation in Bangladesh. Commonality across the fleet will

continue to play a major role in furthering growth, especially as it enables our airline customers to reduce operating costs and expenditures associated with training and maintenance," said Schulte.

Industry insiders also said, with a mixed fleet, the national flag carrier will have to train its cockpit, cabin crew members and engineers afresh to deal with the new aircraft. All these will cost plenty of money.