

Biman Board accords approval for 14 Boeing Aircraft

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Dhaka: Biman Bangladesh Airlines has taken a major step toward fleet expansion after its board of directors accorded policy-level approval to purchase 14 aircraft from US-based aerospace giant Boeing, signaling renewed momentum in the national carrier's long-delayed modernization plans.

The decision was made at a board meeting held on December 30, Biman spokesperson Boshra Islam confirmed today, January 1. With the approval in place, Biman will now enter formal negotiations with Boeing on aircraft pricing, delivery schedules, financing options, and other commercial terms.

According to sources familiar with the process, the board reviewed Boeing's aircraft sales proposal dated November 24, along with a revised draft agreement submitted on December 20. The proposal includes the sale of two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, eight Boeing 787-10

Dreamliners and four Boeing 737-8 narrow-body aircraft—models suited for both long-haul and regional operations.

Officials emphasized that the approval does not constitute a binding commitment and merely authorizes negotiations. No financial or legal obligations will arise until a final contract is signed.

The move follows a broader government commitment made in August during trade negotiations with the United States, under which Bangladesh agreed in principle to procure 25 Boeing aircraft as part of a reciprocal tariff and trade framework. Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman recently told the media that aircraft procurement formed a key component of the wider trade engagement with Washington.

Biman's existing fleet is already heavily Boeing-centric, with 14 of its 19 aircraft manufactured by the US company. The proposed acquisition would further consolidate Boeing's dominance in the flag carrier's fleet, while significantly boosting Biman's capacity amid rising passenger demand.

However, the Boeing approval has also triggered renewed diplomatic and commercial competition. European diplomats have stepped up efforts to promote Airbus aircraft sales to Bangladesh, as discussions over the purchase of 10 Airbus aircraft—initiated under the previous government—remain unresolved. Following a meeting with then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in September 2023, French President Emmanuel Macron publicly acknowledged Bangladesh's intention to acquire Airbus jets.

With Airbus intensifying engagement and Boeing advancing negotiations, Bangladesh finds itself at the centre of a strategic aviation procurement contest.

Industry analysts note that Biman is under mounting economic and operational pressure to expand and modernize its fleet, as the country's fast-growing aviation market continues to be dominated by foreign carriers. Currently, Bangladeshi airlines collectively hold only about 25% of the market share, underscoring the urgency for capacity expansion, network growth, and fleet efficiency improvements.

The outcome of the ongoing negotiations—both with Boeing and Airbus—is expected to play a critical role in shaping Biman's

competitive position over the next decade.