

Ray of hope : Long-awaited recruitment of professionals underway at Biman

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Dhaka : Following major reshuffle of Biman Bangladesh Airlines' management during the current interim government's tenure, at last the country's flag carrier has been blessed by an expert aviation professional sitting in the Managing Director and CEO's chair-a position which boasts a great deal of power to turn the ailing airline around. With the infusion of new efficient and expert management, the long-anticipated direct recruitment of professionals is underway at the national airline.

On September 4, 2024, Dr Md Shafiqur Rahman was appointed the new Managing Director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines-45th in the airline's 53 years-long history. Prior to him, since inception, the country's flag carrier was mostly managed by bureaucrats, many of whom failed to tap the airline's true commercial potential or achieve the desired market share, with only the exception of two retired foreign

airline executives who were there for a brief period and were not appropriate selections either. Hence, it was imperative to bring the airline out of bureaucratic legacy and induct representatives with professional and entrepreneurship skills.

Shafiqur Rahman commenced his career with Biman in 1986 as a Trainee Commercial Officer. Over the years, he has held several key positions including Director of Administration and Human Resources, Director of Procurement and Logistics Support and Director of Marketing and Sales. Rahman has also worked in the airline's tariff, market research, reservation, cargo and other departments. Furthermore, he has served as the Country Manager of Biman in its Singapore, Thailand and Greece stations, eventually retiring in 2017, after a long illustrious career.

The new Managing Director and CEO's first priority at the moment is to bring back professionalism at Biman-which has been a long-awaited demand-to return the airline to its former glory. Lack of efficient manpower is one of the biggest crises of the national carrier at present. Therefore, the airline is currently infusing new blood in several departments.

Dr Md Shafiqur Rahman, Managing Director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the capital recently.



To this effect, Biman has conducted 38 new officer level recruitment across several departments through direct procedures. Retirees with successful track record are returning to the company in contractual basis too. Not only that but also the airline has recruitment underway for 100 new cabin crew as well as 90 traffic helpers. Furthermore, the carrier will be hiring new cadet pilots even, about 40, in November, according to the new Managing Director and CEO.

Establishing the practice of discipline at the airline is another area the new qualified management is laying emphasis on, stressed the Managing Director and CEO. For instance, there will be neither any blocking of seats on any flight or any override of reservations. Every seat on a flight will be available online and all channels will be open for all to see, informed Rahman, adding, strict monitoring, to this effect, is

underway.

Getting luggage on time at the belt area of the airport is another move Biman is currently working on. Luggage thefts are being prevented with strict security measures. Even BFCC-Biman Flight Catering Centre has been bestowed with tight security by the airline itself. Scanners are in place at the premise. RFID at all entry and exit points of the facility will be placed soon. Also, inflight wastage is being sealed by the cabin crew from now onwards, claimed Biman's boss.

Moreover, another dire need is to make the airline's existing routes more efficient. Varieties of measures are being undertaken for this purpose, according to Rahman. From now onwards, without any proper market research, the airline will not make any move, especially opening new routes, he claimed.

Furthermore, to increase route efficiency, frequencies have been reduced at certain routes with less demand and have been increased on others which have more of that, said the chief of the airline. For instance, frequencies to Tokyo and Manchester have been reduced, while flights to Toronto have been increased. As a result, the airline is eyeing higher revenues in the coming days on the aforementioned routes.

The airline has also applied for a fifth frequency at London Heathrow. Also, the airline is pondering to switch the technical landing of its Dhaka-Toronto flight from Manchester to Rome for efficient crew management, he noted.

Moreover, Biman is looking into new promising routes like Maldives, mentioned the Managing Director and CEO. Biman will also commence efforts to fly passengers to the Westcoast through codeshare partnerships with other international airlines.

Speaking of which, Rahman mentioned, already SPA agreement with Italy's flag carrier ITA Airways is finalised. The move is poised to bring more efficiency to the Dhaka-Rome route with more connections within Italy and to other parts of Europe. SPA preparations with Japan Airlines is also in progress, informed the head of Biman.

The aging fleet of Biman will be another major worry in the coming days, stressed Rahman. Without the expansion of fleet, the airline will

fail to open new routes or increase frequencies as per the growing demand to the existing destinations in its network, sighed Rahman. Also, there are routes that could benefit from operating another aircraft than the one currently in operation, suggested the MD and CEO.

For example, Singapore and Bangkok are being operated by Boeing 737. According to Rahman, operating this model of aircraft on the said routes leave little space for cargo transport, as passenger luggage occupies most of the belly area. Thus, Biman is now looking into certain aircraft types that fall between Boeing 737 and Boeing 777 to operate on the aforementioned routes, informed the airline's boss, adding, the upcoming meetings at Biman will have the agenda to finalise a fleet plan till the year 2035.

The flag carrier is also aiming to have a full-fledged establishment at Chattogram and Sylhet airports with complete facilities for engineers, crew and food. W-pattern operation looks promising in this regard, according to Rahman.