

## FOCUS

## Biman: Fleet Modernisation Programme

by Hedayat Ahmed

**In order to cater for passenger growth, Biman now has to move to higher passenger capacity aircraft than the DC10-30. But such an addition to passenger capacity has to be on a prudent, calculated and gradual basis, rather than taking a quantum leap into a capacity growth.**

In my last write up on Biman I had advanced a set of suggestions to improve the economic viability, regularity and public image of the national carrier in order to meet the challenges of the time. In this paper I shall offer some concrete proposals to modernise its fleet of wide-body aircrafts in order to remain competitive in a region where the air transport industry is poised for a phenomenal growth.

For reasons for sheer economic necessities and commercial considerations Biman needs urgently to phase out its present fleet of DC10-30 aircraft and replace them with later-built modern type of aircraft which will not only be economical to operate, but also provide the carrier with the vital means of enhancing substantially both its passenger and cargo revenues in the next 15 years. Such a proposed fleet modernisation programme, which is long overdue, when implemented will enable it to improve its all-round image as a reliable international carrier of passenger and cargo, offering quality aircraft and services, maintaining acceptable levels of schedule regularities, which will then produce the desired end-result of substantial improvement of passenger and cargo revenues. Coupled with savings achieved due to lower fuel consumption, much lower maintenance costs, and other economic benefits of operating

a modernised fleet over the next 15 years, Biman will cease to be a financial drain on the limited resources of the government, and the country.

In a way, the fleet modernisation programme has already been put into operation with the acquisition of two new Airbus A310-300. This will fill a great vacuum that has existed for far too long in the aircraft capacity (size) between DC10-30 at one end, and the Fokker F28/ATP at the other. This, of course, happened due to the absence of Boeing 707-320C from the fleet. The two new acquisitions will fill the role as a regional all-passenger aircraft for Biman.

Biman now needs to proceed with the fleet modernisation programme on its extensive international route network which produces today, and has even much greater potential of producing tomorrow, substantial amount of revenues in passenger and cargo sales.

The airline has to analyse, and develop the market strategies, for optimising the potential that exists, keeping a pragmatic view of the ever-changing global aviation environment, particularly in the significant field of traffic rights granted by one country to another. Up to now Biman has remained primarily a passenger carrier, with cargo, more or less, being carried on a non-emphasised low-key basis. There are several reasons for this. First, was the fact that the

such restrictions. Recognising this scenario, PIA and Air India amongst others, are adjusting their passenger capacity for the trans-Atlantic flights to US points from 1997. Biman has to bear this important factor in mind, whilst determining the passenger capacity it should acquire in its proposed fleet modernisation/acquisition plan.

It has to be borne in mind that neither Biman's own resources nor any substantial borrowing from the government will enable it meet huge outlay in acquiring new aircrafts. Hence, it will be obliged to explore the used aircraft market in order to modernise its fleet. Moreover, it is recognised that any used aircraft (even in the best of condition) is not a NEW aircraft.

Nevertheless, vast number of airlines around the world (and not only airlines from the third world) are buying used aircraft, as they find that inspite of their unquestionable benefits an airline like Biman cannot afford the prestige, or luxury, nor the overall economics of acquiring and operating aircraft like MD11 or Airbus A340 which are both excellent aircraft. So, a balanced, properly analysed and objective compromise approach has to be made in selecting the right type of aircraft which will meet the expectation of travelling public as well as satisfy the increasing demand for cargo.

Only reliable used aircraft available in the market are Boeing 747-200 and -300 models. Thus, a choice has to be made between all-passenger

and combi (i.e. both passenger and cargo version) models. This decision needs to be taken very professionally keeping in view the projected growth in passenger as well as cargo. Two alternative scenario are presented hereunder.

Assuming Biman acquires four all-passenger B747-200, it would mean a jump of 50 per cent more seats per flight as compared to existing DC10-30. Obviously, this is not a feasible option, at least, in the short term. For the same reason, acquisition of B747-300 will increase passenger capacity by 60 per cent per flight as compared to present. In other words, only viable option is to acquire an all-combi fleet of B747-200/300 models.

It is to be noted that B747 combi has been designed and

built by Boeing to provide greater flexibility to an airline to operate it, when needed, either as an all-passenger version or in mixed (passenger-cum-cargo) configuration. In combi configuration increase in passenger capacity will be within the manageable means of Biman's commercial department while offering substantial cargo capacity at no additional operating cost. This is what will make a B747 combi ideal capacity aircraft across the Atlantic. The lower capacity of combi will cater for possible loss of some 5th freedom traffic rights from EU countries to USA and vice versa; but at the same time providing additional passenger capacity over the current DC10-30, in a prudent and calculated manner.

While surfing the world market for used aircraft Biman must avoid acquiring any aircraft which are more than 20 years old and which are now categorised in industry's terminology as 'aging' aircraft with very high fuel consumption and high maintenance costs. Retirement age of such aircraft will fall due in next 5-7 years. However, later models, such as B747-300 will face such a situation in the next decade or so.

Replacement of DC10-30 with more advanced aircraft having higher passenger and cargo capacity needs to be addressed urgently in view of the following: (a) resale value of DC10-30 is fast declining, (b) it is no longer in production, (c) Biman must cater for growth in passenger traffic, (d) prudent exploitation of cargo potential, and (e) better, economic return on investment.

training in this regard. He especially emphasised for educational VDO programmes on hygiene and sanitation, at least once in a month, by the involved organisations.

Showing her hands, Kalpana, a student of class four of this school, said, "Now, I pare my nails regularly and following me, my younger brothers and sisters also pare their nails, wash their hands with soap before meal and after defecation. Now we don't complain of any stomach trouble."

Women play a particular role in maintaining family hygiene, and responsibility of the mother in this respect more than any one in the family. Because, the children, future citizens, would grow up as their mothers teach them to be.

A discussion was held with Moslema, a worker of Human Development Programme following a courtyard meeting at Barachala village. She said, "We not only tell these women about the benefits of hygiene and sanitation, but also discuss with them the other reasons responsible for impairment of health, such as early marriage, excess child-bearing, importance of mother's milk etc."

She thinks these efforts have helped change the women's views and thinking.

"I don't want to repeat the same mistake of my parents by giving marriage of my daughter before 18," reluctantly said Bilkis Akhtar, a member of Kamplamali Mahila Samity of Barachala village.

Bilkis could not even complete her SSC for getting married at 16. And naturally she and her child suffer ill health. So, Bilkis and others like her are trying to aware the village sanitation development committee with local elite and people of different strata of the community etc.

But the means is not the end. It remains to be seen, how much these efforts are effective and how much is implemented.

In a discussion in this regard Mr. Abdur Awal, Headmaster of Samia Taher Model Girls high school at Bhaluka thana maintained, "There are about 400 students in our school and many of them come from a distance of 4-5 kilometres. We take minimum two classes per month specially to aware them of different matters of hygiene and sanitation."

Mr. Awal added that, this effort has not only made their pupils conscious but has also encouraged the guardians of the wards. And, as a result, 90 per cent of the households of the students concerned have adopted tubewell and sanitary latrine facilities.

But he thinks that the teachers also need to take some

After all, our male dominated society is also very much responsible for the retardation of our health and environment. Moreover, there are very old superstitions and blind conceptions. Many a male does not let the female take part in beneficial development activities and even tend to consider it as an affront to religious practices.

However, it is true that, like in Charpara and Barachala the wind of change is also blowing over some other villages. But the progress achieved would be only momentary if we do not come forward irrespective of male or female. Beliefs, or practices. Let wisdom play its part. Let us feel that we all have to work side by side shunning off superstitions. Only then the majority of the 68 thousands villages, if not be envisaged whole, can be turned into safe human habitats.

## HEALTH-HYGIENE-SANITATION

## Wind of Change Blowing over Villages

by Onirvan Shah



School programme, Bhaluka: Reaching the message to their parents

persuading the women in the families. Then, following them, others also came forward to avail the benefits of sanitation.

"We are trying to turn this village into a model one by explaining the importance of hygiene and sanitation in the light of Hadith and Quran during the prayer congregations in the mosque and with a call to adopt appropriate measures towards maintaining health and hygiene in greater congregations, at least once in a month," said Qari Md. Rustom Ali, imam of local mosque who is also a member of Barachala village under Phulupur thana.

Like Saleha's some other families of this and other villages also are taking this advantage of modern hygiene in their bid to survive, healthily.

"None of my family members has suffered from diarrhoea or any such dangerous disease for the last two years and also not heard of anyone being affected in our village," said Sabitha Khatun of Barachala village under Bhaluka thana.

All these years Noorjahan had devoted a lot of time to reading books on health. In 1994 an old friend sent her a copy of Jean Carper's "Food - Your Miracle Medicine." It explained the importance of diet and talked of the allergic reactions to various foods. It gave a list of twenty foods that were most apt to aggravate (rheumatoid) arthritis. Corn and wheat were the worst culprits, followed by red meat, oranges, milk, oats, rye, eggs, coffee, malt, cheese, grapefruit, tomato, peanuts, sugar (cane), butter, lemon, soya.

Noorjahan was amazed to discover that the recommendations were very similar to what her holistic doctor had told her.

This is now 1996 and Noorjahan is completely well. Her 'miracle' cure wasn't any type of medicine but an awareness of the foods to which she was allergic, and their elimination from her diet. It really was as simple as that!

These changed, however, appear insignificant in comparison to our large population, but this is no less important that some people have become conscious and endeavouring to live a healthy and happy life today.

But all this awareness has not grown overnight among the rural people. This bears a continuous contribution of a number of voluntary organizations and some already conscious people of the villages.

Khushna Ara, a worker of Human Development Programme, an NGO working in Bhaluka thana, said: "At the beginning, people were not interested in the matter of hygiene or sanitation and stayed away from us. Later on we could be able to motivate them, make them understand, specially by

tend them some loans. Not that no favourable response in this respect has been received: "We have undertaken profitable projects like nursery, bee-farming, even lending programme alongside pure drinking water supply and sanitary latrine making, selling and installation, with the help of some donor organisations, through which the poor villagers have found a way or earning and thus enjoying the health and sanitation facilities," maintained Mr. Abdul Khaled, Executive Director of Grameen Manobik Unnayan Sangstha" (GRAMAU), a local voluntary organisation of Phulupur thana.

While talking to the regional officer of NGO Forum for Drinking water Supply and Sanitation, one of the donor organisations of the local establishments, it came to light that NGO Forum has so far installed 999 tubules in 124 unions of Mymensingh region through its 66 partner organisations, and the partner organisations have sold 10,176 latrines through 32 Village Sanitation Centres (where latrine construction materials like ring, slab etc. are made), which have benefited 14,835 families of this region.

Not that the Forum has extended only financial help to the partners but also supplied them with necessary instruments and arranged for necessary training of their workers. And the Forum officer believes

that this entire activity has also generated opportunities of some extra income for the villagers.

The working organisations have already taken some initiatives to aware the rural people and encourage them to adopt these health and hygiene measures such as, holding regular courtyard meeting with people of all strata, specially the women, school programmes to aware the school children, video show, forming village sanitation development committee with local elite and people of different strata of the community etc.

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## The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

## STAR MOVIES

2.30 TMM 4.00 Index 4.30 All out 5.00 Jagran

## PTV

8.00 am Tawat Aar Marjana

Maan Naat 8.20 Cartoon 8.30

Khatra 8.45 Abi Patra Challa

9.05 Khati Farmash 9.20 Sargan

9.45 Ilaaj-Bil Ghiza Pak

10.05 Shab Daagh 10.35

English Film 10.45 Troop 10.55

Milk Nagnu 11.00 Khatra

11.30 Film Fiction 11.45 Mosh

12.00 Shama (Drama Serial)

12.55pm Quran-e-Hakeem 1-02

Bismillah 1-15 Angara (Drama

Serial) 2-00 Shehrad (Drama

Serial) 2-50 The Face Of Cultural

3-15 Roushi 3-30 Panshey 4-00

Ghurani 4-35 Biology for 10th

Geography/ Chemistry 5-55 Inter-

College Quiz 6-25 Avon Cousei

7-00 Tarzan (Drama Serial) 7-45

English News 8-00 Potluck 8-20

9-30 Film Tom Se Kahan Tha

## DD 7

10.30 Jamadin 10.35 Educ. Prog

11.00 Nagrijeet 11.15 Folk

Songs 12.30 Ek Sui Onek Gaan

1.00 Janan 2.30 Ek Diner Sultan

3.00 Gaan Niye/Darpan 3.30 Istra

5.05 Nepal Programme 5.30

News 5.35 Desh Bidesher Khetia

6.00 Palki Katha 6.30 Batava

## EL TV

6.55 Arati 7.30 Bangla Sanbad

7.55 Omnidan 8.00 Dok Darshan

8.45 Saptahik 9.00 Janani 9.30

Frachier 10.00 Bengali Movie

Cafe Film Show 10.00 Closed

00.30am R D Burman Special

01.30 Tarane 02.30 Chhuparao

02.00 Mem Hoon 2.00 Dance Dance

3.00 Shatranj 3.00 Fat or Fit 4.00

04.30 Lata 05.30 R D

Burman Special 06.30 Tarane

07.30 Chhuparao 08.30 Jeevan

Ke Rang 09.30 Lata Mangeshkar

Special 10.30 Kal Bhi Aaj Bh

8.00 Abhinetri 8.20 Haseen Pal

11.00 Ten Bi Chup, Meri Bi

Chup 11.30 Wonder Wings Amar

Prem 12.00 Jawab Do 12.30

Dame Anar Ke 1.00 Men Nashe

10.30 Stand by 10.40 Sidsa

Mem Hoon 2.00 Dance Dance

11.00 Song Yatra 11.30 Orem

Hit Thi Hit Ha 12.00 Intezar

## ZEE CINEMA

6.30 Tarana 7.00 IBA 8.00