Biman needs more than new aircraft to compete globally



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■ ZARIF FAIAZ

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is on a shopping spree.

In April, it signed an agreement to buy 14 Boeing aircraft. In September, it added another 11, taking its Boeing order book to 25. Now, the government is negotiating with Airbus for another 10 aircraft: four A350-900s and six A321neos. If all of these purchases go through, Biman, which currently operates 19 aircraft, will have 35 new planes in its procurement pipeline.

The government's justification is that it carries only a little over 20 percent of international passenger demand in Bangladesh, leaving foreign airlines with the rest: more planes would allow Biman to increase frequencies, open routes, and compete for more of that traffic.

But competing for passengers is very different from merely having enough seats to carry them. A Bangladeshi expatriate travelling home from Jeddah may choose Biman because it offers a convenient direct flight. However, a foreigner travelling from Europe to Southeast Asia has far less reason to do so. If Bangladesh genuinely wants Dhaka to become an aviation hub, Biman would have to compete on fares, frequencies, connections, reliability, and service, not simply add capacity.

The challenge is to turn Biman into an internationally desirable brand, to make Biman an airline that passengers, Bangladeshi or not, actively choose and subsequently recommend. To do that, Biman needs to look like it belongs in this century.

The first step is branding.

Unfortunately, Biman's entire brand identity seems to be stuck in the 80s. Nothing about the airline—from its bland typography and dated cabin hospitality to its severely outdated social media and website—tells you that this is a serious airline ready to take flight in the modern 21st century.

Biman has spent years modernising its fleet without ever fully deciding what a modern Biman should actually be. The airline operates Dreamliners—among the world's most technologically advanced passenger aircraft. Yet the wider Biman experience does not consistently communicate the same modernity.

The Balaka, Biman's logo designed by Quamrul Hassan, is a wonderful piece of Bangladeshi design heritage, and there is no real good reason to abandon the core logo. But preserving an icon does not require preserving an entire visual language around it indefinitely. Biman has clung to the mundane past all the while; the world has moved on, and the best airlines have kept up.

Emirates, for example, understood that an airline is more than transport. Emirates began flying in 1985 with just two leased aircraft from Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). The difference between PIA and Emirates is sky-high 41 years later. Emirates' original brief was remarkably simple: the airline had to "look good, be good, and make money". The impression it created is remarkably consistent with the impression Dubai wants to create of itself: polished, confident, international, expensive, and ambitious.

Qatar Airways has pursued a similar idea. Its branding is quieter and more restrained: burgundy, grey, the oryx, and the word Qatar prominently displayed across its aircraft. When the airline redesigned its livery in 2006, it deliberately removed the word "Airways" from the most prominent part of the fuselage and enlarged "QATAR". The airline said at the time that the change reflected the growing importance of the country.

The airline has spent years associating that name with luxury, attention to detail, and a carefully controlled premium experience. Its own brand material has repeatedly emphasised luxury and distinctive service. The intended impression carries into Doha: sophisticated, orderly, affluent, and increasingly worth experiencing rather than merely passing through.

SriLankan Airlines offers a useful regional example. Despite operating from a much smaller economy, the airline has built parts of its passenger experience around a recognisable Sri Lankan identity. In 2026, it received regional awards for overall passenger experience and improvement, while previous awards have recognised its inflight food, entertainment, and destination marketing.

The point is that these airlines seem to understand something Biman still needs to internalise: an airline is both a transportation company and a consumer brand. It needs to identify a credible position of its own: competitive value, recognisable Bangladeshi hospitality, and a world-class experience that passengers can trust.



Biman needs a visual identity worthy of contemporary Bangladesh. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

However, a rebranding promise only works when the organisation can deliver it. Service reform must happen alongside visual reform. If Biman is to compete seriously with international airlines, its modernisation must reach far beyond the aircraft, advertising, or cabin service. This is one of the less glamorous lessons offered by the airlines Biman wants to compete with.

Singapore Airlines, for example, has treated organisational capability as part of the product. During its transformation programme in 2018, the airline changed its IT development model, invested in digital skills across its workforce, and reported cutting application development time to market by about 40 percent. Its more recent annual reporting continues to emphasise continuous training, cross-functional mobility, and the development of digital and service capabilities among employees.

Emirates invests in the same principle from another direction. Its Centre of Hospitality Excellence trains not only cabin crew but also check-in and lounge employees, while new cabin crew undergo weeks of structured safety and service training before operating flights. In 2025, Emirates opened a dedicated hospitality training facility intended eventually to serve its roughly 25,000 cabin crew.

Biman is not, contrary to its old reputation, currently a consistently loss-making airline. It recently reported Tk 785.21 crore in net profit for the fifth consecutive year. Boeing deliveries under the current programme are also scheduled to begin from 2031. There is, in other words, time before much of this new capacity arrives. Biman should seize this moment. By 2031, passengers should not simply see new aircraft. They should see a radically new airline, ready to promote Bangladesh to the world.

Passengers today choose Dubai, Doha, Singapore, Istanbul, or other connecting hubs because airlines, airports, schedules, baggage systems, lounges, immigration rules, hotels, tourism agencies, and ground transport work together closely enough to make connecting through them worthwhile.

Dhaka will have to provide the bare necessities. Why should someone flying from Manchester to Bangkok, or from Jeddah to Kuala Lumpur, connect through Bangladesh rather than somewhere else? This question matters far more than how many planes Biman has.

Bangladesh absolutely should have an ambitious national carrier. It should have more routes, greater capacity, modern aircraft, and a much larger share of the country's international passenger market. But ambition must extend beyond procurement. Biman (and the airport too, in time) needs a visual identity worthy of contemporary Bangladesh. It needs to free itself from dated bureaucratic clutches and create a genuine tourism proposition that makes foreigners curious about the country whose flag is painted on the tail. Most importantly, it needs to understand what business it is actually in—branding the country to the world. It needs to take Bangladesh to the world. And, in turn, bring the world to Bangladesh.

Biman has all the potential to become an aviation icon. Boeing can sell Biman a Dreamliner. Airbus can sell it an A350. Neither can sell it a reputation. That part Biman Bangladesh Airlines will have to build for itself.

Feminism isn't what we consume, it's what we practise and fight for



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Consider the language of beauty advertising. Try this shampoo to make your hair shinier and silkier and express yourself more confidently. Spritz on this fragrance to make men notice you. Buy this makeup to hide how tired you are and achieve flawless beauty, rather than asking why you are so burned out in the first place. Buy our product to run as fast as a man!

Apparently, empowerment is just one purchase away.

How often do we come across advertisements that promise women empowerment through a product, a makeover, or a crafted, catchy slogan? From billboards to social media campaigns, feminist language has increasingly become part of marketing. But beneath these catchy slogans and promises of confidence, what are we really being sold? Is it empowerment or are we simply being given new ways to feel inadequate, insecure and in need of another product? Behind these empowering messages often lie the same standards of femininity that feminism has long questioned and challenged.

Often, the women featured in these advertisements are popular models; polished, confident, and financially capable of consuming the products being promoted. But how different is their journey from that of a woman living in a rural community, struggling to access even basic necessities? More importantly, who are these messages actually targeting and reaching? Are they reaching the women who are looking for empowerment, or are they speaking primarily to those who have the means to consume the product being advertised?

American sociologist Goldman and his colleagues in a paper published in 1991 used the term commodity feminism to describe how feminist discourse can be redirected through mass media and transformed into marketable signs attached to brands and commodities. This is particularly visible and relatable in today's consumer culture. For instance- a woman can supposedly become more confident by buying the right clothes. Sure, but do these messages acknowledge how underpaid the women are who work day and night to produce these clothes in a garment factory? We are encouraged to use the right anti-aging cosmetics or makeup products to conceal the imperfections, but why do we not question why women are punished or judged for growing older? The obsession with women's beauty is not something new in society. However, the way brands are feeding and selling this obsession to us in a packaged form calls for attention and scrutiny. The contrast between "you are powerful" but "you need to look a certain way to be taken seriously" is striking. An advertisement may tell a woman that she is powerful and independent while simultaneously suggesting that she needs smoother skin, shinier hair, a slimmer waist, or a more attractive appearance to be valued, heard, and taken as seriously as the men around her.

Feminist language has undeniable appeal because words such as confidence, independence, equality, and empowerment carry personal, political, and emotional weight. Brands understand this. By associating themselves with these ideas and often pairing them with catchy music and polished visuals, they can position a product as more than a commodity. Buying it can begin to feel like an expression of identity or even a small act of liberation. But empowerment is not the same as feeling good, and it is certainly not the same as overconsumption.

A campaign celebrating women's confidence does not necessarily address gender-based violence. A product marketed around women's independence does not automatically challenge unequal wages, unpaid care work, discrimination, barriers to education, or the oppression that women face across the world. A brand can celebrate "strong women" while leaving the structural conditions that limit millions of women entirely untouched. Hashtag feminism has increasingly become part of advertising, with brands using social-media campaigns to market ideas of female empowerment.

There is also a question of class disparity. Who can afford to participate in this supposed version of feminism? If empowerment is increasingly communicated through products, lifestyles, and experiences, then access to empowerment risks becoming a privilege. The woman who cannot afford these products is not less deserving of confidence, dignity, or equality. Yet consumer culture can subtly suggest that she is missing something. It can also create an "us" versus "them," where the "us" is presented as more culturally refined, educated, modern, and sophisticated, while the "others" are portrayed as backward, less modern, or not as capable. In that sense, consumer feminism may reinforce the very social divisions that feminism seeks to challenge.

None of this means that women should not enjoy beauty products, fashion, or self-care. Consumption and feminism do not have to be opposites. The problem begins when purchasing is presented as a substitute for political and social change.

We need to become more discerning and critical about the feminism we encounter in advertisements and on social media. Is a brand genuinely engaging with gender inequality, or is it simply using feminist language to sell us another product? Feminism cannot be reduced to a slogan on a billboard, a hashtag on Instagram, or a product on a shelf. Real empowerment requires confronting inequalities beyond the marketplace and addressing them from the grassroots level.

It is high time we learn to distinguish between feminism that challenges inequality and marketing strategies that simply know how to package and sell it. Because when feminism becomes too advertising-friendly, we risk confusing visibility with progress and consumption with empowerment. We celebrate the campaign, share the slogan, buy the product and perhaps feel that we have participated in something meaningful. But what changes when the advertisement ends?

If feminism becomes something we consume rather than something we practice, question, and fight for, then we may be buying the language of liberation while leaving the structures of oppression untouched. The real measure of empowerment is not what we are persuaded to buy, but what women are free to become, access, demand, and change.

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e-Tenders is invited in the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of Goods as stated as below:

Sl. No.	Description of Goods & Package No.	Tender ID	Tender/Proposal Publication Date & Time	Tender Security Submission Last Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Closing/Opening Date & Time
01	Medicine & Medical Equipment	1314755	05 October 2026 at 11:00a.m	15 October 2026 at 10:55a.m	15 October 2026 at 11:05a.m
02	Electronics, Electrical & Other Items	1325216	05 October 2026 at 12:00p.m	15 October 2026 at 12:05p.m	15 October 2026 at 13:00p.m
03	Diary Calendar & Others	1338385	05 October 2026 at 12:00p.m	15 October 2026 at 11:05a.m	15 October 2026 at 12:05p.m

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no Offline/ hard copies will accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fee's for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited, online through any registered Bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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