

Biman in long-haul fleet renewal

Airline prepares to issue tenders for Boeing 777s after the Bangladeshi government approves fleet modernisation



Biman is preparing to replace its ageing McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30s

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is resurrecting its long-haul fleet renewal effort and is planning to acquire Boeing 777s.

The airline is preparing to issue tenders for three or four of the twinjets to replace its fleet of six ageing McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30s on long-haul services.

The tender notices are expected to be issued in October, after the state-owned carrier's government tentatively approved a long-delayed fleet modernisation.

State minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin says the government has accepted a proposal from

an airline board subcommittee, although it is too early to say how many twinjets will be sought or how the aircraft will be procured.

Biman has been considering modernising its international fleet for some time and two years ago it issued requests for proposals covering the acquisition of four Airbus A340-300s or 777-200ERs.

The carrier later said it had deferred plans to acquire new aircraft until its proposed privatisation was settled. The government's attempts to privatise the carrier ultimately failed. As well as its DC-10-30s, the airline also flies four Airbus A310-300s on long-haul services.

ROUTES

■ Argentinian carrier **Southern Winds** has commenced four times weekly services between Buenos Aires and Miami. ■ UK charter start-up **Astræus** will expand operations to the Red Sea resort of Taba in Egypt for its winter season. ■ **EasyJet** has cancelled the two **Go** routes on which both carriers competed – from Belfast International to Edinburgh and Glasgow. The two airlines are in the throes of a merger. Meanwhile, Go will launch daily services from Bristol to Venice from 27 October. ■ **Santa Barbara Airlines Cargo** has begun daily freight services from Miami to Curacao, Caracas, Valencia, Aruba and Maracaibo, using McDonnell Douglas DC-10F and Antonov An-26 aircraft. ■ **LanChile** has started flying from Santiago to Auckland and on to Sydney three times a week in a code share with Qantas. ■ From 27 October, **Thai Airways International** will start three weekly flights from Bangkok to Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Geneva and Xiamen. Frequencies will be boosted to Beijing, Busan, Chengdu, Frankfurt, Hanoi, London, Melbourne, and Tokyo (via Phuket).

PROCUREMENT MARY KIRBY / WASHINGTON DC

Star signs sourcing deal with Rockwell

Star Alliance and Rockwell Collins have signed a strategic sourcing agreement which could lead to joint procurement of avionics and in-flight entertainment systems and services by the member airlines. The first opportunity identified is the potential consolidated purchase of flat-panel displays to replace the cathode ray tube flightdeck instruments on 169 Boeing 747s across the Star member airlines' fleets.

Under the agreement, the first of its kind between a global airline grouping and an avionics supplier, Rockwell will create standardised system solutions and procurement requirements that will streamline purchasing by the Star member airlines. Initial work includes defining requirements for avionics products and services and determining the cockpit configurations of current and future aircraft.

Star Alliance chief executive Jaan Albrecht says the pact is essentially "an umbrella agreement between Rockwell Collins and the 14 Star carriers" that aims to bring uniformity and economies of scale to their procurement processes. "Star

has a fleet of more than 2,000 aircraft, so there are obvious reasons for these kinds of agreements," which could mean annual savings for member airlines "of tens of millions of dollars", he says.

Albrecht says the agreement will allow Star to begin reducing its surplus avionics inventory. "One of the things we've been striving towards is standardisation among the airlines," says Bruce MacCoubrey, vice-president of strategic services at Star member Air Canada. "There is a huge opportunity as we do that to reduce our inventory levels and create a much more efficient global support network."

The agreement allows Rockwell and Star "to take a good hard look at the quantities and performance levels of equipment that perhaps could be made common across the partners", says Rockwell Collins Commercial Systems chief operating officer Bob Chiusano. Although the agreement makes Rockwell a preferred avionics supplier to Star, it does not guarantee the manufacturer exclusivity in deals with the alliance or its members.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Taiwan pilots suspended pending crash inquiry

Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) has suspended the licences of the three pilots of a China Air Lines (CAL) Airbus A340 which took off from a taxiway at Anchorage airport on 25 January.

The aircraft, with 252 people on board, took off from the taxiway, which was only 2,075m (6,800ft) long, instead of the 3,260m-long runway 32. The A340's main gear hit a snow bank at the end of the taxiway shortly after the aircraft became airborne.

The captain's licence has been suspended for eight months from the date of the incident, and those of the co-pilot and a captain occupying the jump seat for seven months. This action is largely symbolic, because CAL has not allowed the pilots to work since the incident and says it will not make a decision on their future with the carrier until the official inquiry by the US National Transportation Safety Board is completed.