



PIA's proposed network of helicopter routes in East Pakistan. Services are due to begin next October and will expand to most centres during the following year

PIA HELICOPTER PLANS

UNLIKE most international airlines who are trying to prune their networks of unprofitable social domestic services, Pakistan International Airlines are planning to put their long-haul profits to work by providing essential transport for the development of East Pakistan. With many kinds of development under way throughout East Pakistan, one of the main problems is to get government officials, technicians and businessmen to and from the outlying areas.

Further extensions of surface transport would be exceptionally difficult and costly, because most of the country is covered by wide shifting rivers and marshes. For example, a hundred miles of railway going east/west would require up to 75 bridges in its construction apart from having to divert many miles to find suitable sites for bridges. Air transport is the obvious solution, but the use of conventional aircraft would mean building a large number of new airports. Yet again, because of the heavy seasonal rainfall, high water-level and marshy ground, this would be both difficult and expensive due to lack of the right sort of natural materials at hand. The only remaining solution is the helicopter, and the Pakistan Government has now approved PIA's plan for scheduled helicopter services to begin in October this year. It is planned initially to purchase two 25-seat twin-engine turbine helicopters. Although PIA have not yet decided which helicopter they will choose, the two which come closest to the requirement are the Boeing-Vertol 107 Model II and the Sikorsky S-61L.

Sites for about 20 heliports have been surveyed throughout East Pakistan, and the plan is to expand services to all the points within a year bringing even the most remote point on any border within an hour and a half of Dacca, the capital. A striking example of the helicopter's time-saving advantage is on the journey between Dacca and Khulna, which by surface transport takes over 21hr and only 37min by helicopter.

PIA intend to finance the whole operation from their own funds and will not ask the Government for any assistance. Air Cdre Nur Khan, PIA's managing director, has said: "Helicopter opera-

tions are expensive, and in every country where they operate they are subsidized. Our operation will be unique for two reasons. First, there is no precedent in the airline industry for such a large-scale helicopter operation working within a country. Secondly, these operations will not be subsidized by the Government. However, in order to meet the expenditure involved, it will be necessary for us to spread the costs over our more lucrative routes, necessitating an increase in tariffs, both passenger and freight, which we propose to implement between now and April. Our present domestic fare structure in any event is the lowest in the world, and I feel it is reasonable that the fare structure should be revised."

WALK-ON APPEAL

THE power of no-reservation services for generating new traffic has been clearly revealed in a recent Eastern Air Lines survey of passengers on their services between New York, Boston and Washington. Nearly one in five of the passengers on the no-reservation "air shuttle" has been won from surface transport, with more than half the diverted passengers coming from the railways. Biggest single percentage of the participants in the survey, nearly 50 per cent, listed the convenient no-reservations feature as the most important factor in their decision to use the "air shuttle" as opposed to any of the other airlines serving the route.

Since last autumn departures have been scheduled at half-hourly intervals with a 96.3 per cent on-time departures record. Since the "air shuttle" fare is only about 5 per cent lower than the normal tourist-class rate, it is not surprising that only about 5 per cent of passengers listed this fact as a reason for choosing the service.

INTEREST IN THE HERALD

GROWTH of world-wide interest in the Herald appears undiminished. Handley Page have now received a repeat order for one aircraft from the Swiss independent airline Globe Air, who now have three on order, with one on option. In a recent route-proving and demonstration flight to Italy a Herald 200 was shown to Alitalia and SAM. Itavia are due to introduce the Herald on to Italian domestic routes radiating from Rome this spring. A possible Royal Malayan Air Force order for four aircraft, referred to on page 69, would bring firm orders for Heralds to 31, by eleven operators.

At Hatfield on January 9 Sir Aubrey Burke (right), chairman of the de Havilland Aircraft Co, handed over the log book of Kuwait Airways' Comet 4C to the airline's chairman, Mr Nisf Al Yusaf Al Nisf. Present at the ceremony, and seen in the centre of this group, is His Excellency Sheikh Salin Al Sabah, the Heir Apparent of Kuwait

