

Biman Bangladesh suspends freighter plans; delays Dash 8s

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Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG, Dhaka) has suspended its plan to add two dedicated freighters as the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made any such investment impossible for the airline at present time. “There is no way to buy freighters now. Because the company itself is in intensive care,” chief executive Mokabbir Hossain told The Loadstar. The state-owned airline has been deploying its passenger aircraft on cargo-only charter flights since the outbreak of the pandemic. Despite some crisis-specific needs, the emergency, in general, has weakened demand for cargo flights to and from Bangladesh. Although demand is now picking back up with exports growing year-on-year, and the potential for “huge prospects” in this market segment, Biman cannot afford fleet growth at this time. The airline’s fleet consists of two DHC-8-Q400s, six B737-800s, four B787-8s, two B787-9s, and four B777-300(ER)s, all of them in a passenger configuration. Biman’s three new DHC-8-400s have also been delayed as a result of COVID-19. Whereas they were due to have arrived in March, May, and June this year, they have now been retimed with the first to now deliver in November with the other two due in January 2021. Mokkaabir unveiled the plan to add dedicated freighters shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic shook the world. Biman did not disclose the types it was looking at but said it would target South-East Asia with its prospective cargo operations.

