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# Russia and Iran Discuss Aircraft Production as Relations Strengthen Amid Western Pressure

By The Moscow Times

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Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (L) and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov shake hands as they attend a news conference in Moscow, August 29.

Russia and Iran will discuss launching production lines for Tupolev Tu-204 airliners in Iran as the two countries — both paid-up members of the West's Black List — boost their economic cooperation, a source close to the negotiations told the PRIME news agency Tuesday.

The unidentified source told the agency an intergovernmental commission had broached the question "in one form or another" in the past, but without result. The commission will discuss it during a meeting Tuesday, the source said.

A range of energy and nuclear power agreements are also expected to be signed on Tuesday,

following a meeting between Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak and his Iranian counterpart, Hamid Chitchian.

The Russian government is pushing hard to revamp Russia's domestic aircraft industry, which has lost much of its Soviet might due to decades of underinvestment, after Western sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine highlighted the vulnerability of Russian airlines, which fly mainly Boeing and Airbus planes leased from Europe and the U.S.

On Monday, Russia announced it would work with China to produce a new long-range airliner.

The Tu-204 is a twin-engine regional airliner that can carry about 160 to 200 people, and roughly stacks up to the massively successful Boeing 737 and Airbus A320.

Russia earlier attempted to sell Russian-made Tu-204 aircraft to Iran, but the scheme was derailed by U.S. Export restrictions, since the airplane uses engines made by U.S. manufacturer Pratt & Whitney.

Reuters reported in April that Russia and Iran were negotiating an oil-for-goods deal worth $20 billion that would undermine Western sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

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