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Russia Considers Producing Sukhoi Superjets in India

By The Moscow Times

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Russia could assemble the Sukhoi Superjet jet in India.

BANGALORE, INDIA — Russia could assemble the Sukhoi Superjet regional jet in India to take advantage of lower production costs, the president of the plane's maker United Aircraft Co (UAC) said Thursday.

UAC executives had visited several Indian aircraft assembly facilities in India and were impressed with their capabilities, Yury Slyusar, UAC's new president, said at a press conference in the Aero India air show in Bangalore.

"We are looking at domestic production [in India] to help reduce the final price of the aircraft," he said. This will also support Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" campaign, he added.

He declined to say when an agreement might be reached.

State-owned Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) has the only complete aircraft production facility in India. Companies such as Tata Sons, Reliance Group and Mahindra & Mahindra have also been keen to move into the industry.

Producing the Superjet, which can seat up to 100 passengers, in India would chime with the country's nascent hopes of designing and producing a passenger aircraft.

State-owned research agency National Aerospace Laboratories and HAL have, for the past few years, separately worked on a Regional Transport Aircraft (RTA) program to develop a plane that can carry around 100 passengers.

UAC manufactures the Superjet as part of a joint venture with Italy's Alenia Aermacchi, a subsidiary of Finmeccanica. Just over 50 aircraft have been delivered since 2011, with the joint venture having orders for around 300 planes.

Brazil's Embraer dominates the market for regional aircraft, which connect large airport hubs with smaller cities that have high demand for flights but low passenger numbers. Japan's Mitsubishi Aircraft, which counts Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Toyota among its investors, has developed the MRJ regional jet to compete with Embraer.

Canada's Bombardier also produces regional jets.

Aviation consultancy Flightglobal Ascend has forecast a market for 4,071 regional jets worth $128.3 billion by 2033.

UAC officials also confirmed they had begun work with China on the preliminary design of a proposed 250 to 280 seat wide-body aircraft. Full-scale development is expected to begin in 2016, with the plane scheduled to enter into service around 2025.

If successful, this will target the market dominated by the Airbus A330 and A350 and Boeing 787.

China is also developing the Comac C919, a narrow-body jet that it hopes will break into the market dominated by the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737.

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