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Russia Looks to Sell Superjet Passenger Planes to Iran

By The Moscow Times

July 15, 2015



Russia and Iran are holding talks over Russia supplying the Islamic republic with Sukhoi Superjet passenger planes, Russia's Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov said on Wednesday.

"Such talks are being held," Sokolov told reporters. "And not only Superjets, but also other technology is being met with certain interest from our Iranian comrades."

The 108-seat Sukhoi Superjet is the first new airliner Russia has developed since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Iran's civil aviation market could provide a much-needed boost for state-owned Sukhoi, which has struggled as even Russian airlines stock their fleets with planes made by foreign aerospace giants Boeing and Airbus.

Iran, meanwhile, is desperate for new airliners. Due to long-standing international trade sanctions on Tehran, some of Iran's airlines are still flying planes purchased before the 1979

revolution. This has led to a number of catastrophic crashes, including a jet crash in August last year that caused the deaths of at least 38 passengers, news agency BBC reported.

Russia will likely face stiff competition in Iran. After lengthy negotiations, world powers announced Tuesday that they had agreed to lift financial sanctions on Iran, effectively opening the market to international aviation firms.

Sukhoi will, however, likely benefit from the firm backing of the Russian state. In March, President Vladimir Putin announced that United Aircraft Corporation, Sukhoi's parent company, would receive a 100 billion ruble ($1.8 billion) capital injection intended to help it boost Superjet production.

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