

Iran Envisages Buying Russian Superjet Passenger Plane Amidst Western Economic Sanctions. Official

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An official has admitted Iranian aviation companies' interest in Russia's Superjet passenger planes amid Tehran's quest for new aircraft to build up the country's aging fleet, the Fars news agency says.

Vice President for science and technology Sorena Sattari also spoke highly of Superjet International, describing it an "extraordinary aircraft", during a 2.5-hour tour of Russia's largest air show near Moscow along with President Vladimir Putin.

"Superjet is built in cooperation with Airbus and Boeing and Iranian aviation companies are interested in having it since it is a very low-cost aircraft while there is no Airbus in the 100-seat size," he said.

According to Fars, Iran's Kish Air, Zagros Airlines and Caspian Airlines have held negotiations with the Russians.

The 100-seat Superjet is the symbol of Russia's bid to assert its share in the jet manufacturing business. The country has delivered over 50 aircraft since operating the first SSJ100 commercial flight in 2011.

Sattari said Superjet is built by an intentional consortium, with 80% of the aircraft parts being made by Western and non-Russian companies.

"Given Superjet 100's similarities to Airbus, we will have no problem for repair and maintenance of the aircraft," he said.

In July, Russia's Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov said his country was in talks to sell passenger planes to Iran. Russian media, citing aviation officials, have reported on possible delivery of three Superjets to Iran, beginning in 2016.

Officials say Iran will need about 400 civilian aircraft worth at least \$20 billion in the next decade to renovate its aviation fleet which has suffered under years of US and European sanctions.

Representatives of Boeing Co will soon visit Iran to discuss rebuilding the country's ageing aviation fleet, Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi said this month.

Akhoundi also visited Paris in June and "demanded a plan for reconstruction of our aviation fleet" in a meeting with Airbus executives.

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