
No quick deal seen between Airbus and China on A380

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Airbus has studied the possibility of selling China a stake in its flagship A380 superjumbo program in exchange for orders as it tries to shore up declining production, but no immediate deal is on the table, industry sources said.

The Financial Times reported earlier that Airbus was offering an industrial partnership on the world's largest airliner as part of a visit to China by French President Emmanuel Macron this week.

Macron is being accompanied by industry leaders including Airbus planemaking president Fabrice Bregier.

The idea, which has been on the back-burner in Toulouse for some time, would resemble Airbus's decision to take a stake in the Bombardier CSeries, but so far there has been little traction and no deal is imminent, one source said.

"It's not tomorrow," another source added, while others dismissed the prospect of quick progress in China on the A380, whose immediate fate hinges instead on sales talks with Dubai's Emirates.

An Airbus spokesman said, "We don't comment on speculation".

Airbus officials have said that if the 544-seat A380's future can be secured into the next decade, then China is likely to come into the picture because of its frenetic demand growth.

It sees untapped demand for 100 Airbus A380s in China.

Boeing argues that traffic is better served by smaller jets.

During Macron's trip to China, Airbus could, however, reconfirm brisk demand for some of its smallest models with a decision to boost assembly of A320-family jets in the northern port city of Tianjin, one of its four production facilities.

Airbus assembled 50 of the planes in Tianjin last year, compared with a total number of planes delivered to China that is seen as closer to 170. Data is due to be published

on Jan 15.

A decision to increase the contribution of the Chinese plant towards total Airbus single-aisle production could become even more pressing if, as expected, Airbus secures an order for around 100 planes as part of Macron's visit, the sources said.

The final number of jets to be sold has not been determined. China is also said to be shopping for larger jets like the A330.

(By Tim Hopher, Reuters)