FIRST ILYUSHIN IL-96-400M ASSEMBLY KICKS OFF

News / Manufacturer

Assembly of the first four-engine Ilyushin IL-96-400M wide-body passenger aircraft has begun at the Voronezh Aviation Plant (VASO) in southwest Russia.

Earlier in November, the factory reported it was taking delivery of some structural components and was starting subassembly of the new version's wing and fuselage. The design documentation for the complete aircraft is currently also being finalised.

The Ilyushin IL-96-400M is a new passenger version, featuring a 9.65-metre longer, extended fuselage and an additional 20 tonnes of maximum take off weight (MTOW) compared with the original, base IL-96-400T cargo version. With a projected passenger capacity of 390 seats, the first flight of the aircraft – powered by Russian-made PS-90A1 engines – is scheduled for next year. The engine maker UEC-Perm Motors (part of United Engine Corporation) has confirmed it is planning to deliver the first engines for the programme before the end of this year.

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At the beginning of 2018, the Russian government allocated 1.32 billion roubles to United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), parent of the Voronezh Aviation Plant, for the necessary reconstruction and technical upgrade of the manufacturing facilities designated for serial assembly of the IL-96-400M.

The IL-96-400M passenger aircraft project, although officially recognised as commercially unviable, is nevertheless aimed at sustaining and developing the all-round competences of VASO. The facility also participates in other UAC programmes such as the MC-21 advanced narrow-body, the Sukhoi Superjet 100 (SSJ100) regional jet, the Ilyushin IL-114-300 upgraded regional turboprop, and the Ilyushin IL-76MD-90A transport aircraft. Maintaining and upgrading such production capabilities is part of the political strategy of preserving Russia's aviation legacy and its independence from the west in view of the economic sanctions.

Meanwhile, the Voronezh manufacturer has recently reported it was assembling the 25th aircraft of the IL-96-300 series. "We all have the desire to achieve steady production rates of these aircraft, so that the production of the IL-96 wouldn't be interrupted. So we are making a great effort to ensure that the –M model is produced serially as soon as possible," says Yury Shestakov, head of assembly at the Voronezh Aviation Plant.

UAC earlier reported that the planned average production output for the model would be between two and 2.5 aircraft per year until 2025.

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