

BD commits to order 10 A350s: French President Macron

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Dhaka: French President Emmanuel Macron, on September 11, said that Bangladesh had committed to ordering 10 A350s from Airbus, marking the South Asian country's first deal with the European plane manufacturer in a move away from its Boeing dominated fleet.

French officials said the deal for the A350 widebody aircraft is being finalised with the national carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Speaking at the joint media briefing after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office in the capital, the French President expressed, "I thank you for your trust in the European aerospace industry and this commitment for 10 Airbus A350s is important."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "We both hope that this new

strategic move between Bangladesh and France will play an effective role in establishing regional and global stability and peace."

Reports cited Md Mahbub Ali, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, saying, the initial order would be for two Airbus aircraft.

Currently, Biman has a Boeing dominated fleet of 21 planes: six Boeing 737-800s, four 777-300ERs, four 787-8s, two 787-9s, and five short-haul De Havilland Canada Dash-8 400s.

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"We have asked for 10 aircraft in phases. The technical committee is now evaluating. These aircraft will be used on new and old routes. Each country has Airbus and Boeing in its fleet but we only have Boeing and not a single Airbus," said the State Minister, as per reports.

Biman's demand for more widebody aircraft comes as travel is witnessing a strong rebound in the post-pandemic times.

The national airline is currently operating direct flights to 20 destinations worldwide including the UK, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, and Thailand.

After attending the G20 summit in New Delhi, French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in the capital on September 10 evening at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had visited Paris in November 2021.

On the day, he enjoyed a music show performed by local band Joler Gaan at Dhanmondi Lake.

Macron also experienced an essential element of Bangladeshi life by going on a brief river cruise on Turag.

Later, Macron attended an official banquet dinner hosted by the Prime Minister at Hotel InterContinental Dhaka.

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On September 11, he visited Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi to pay homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Then, he attended a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The two countries signed a letter of intent for space partnership between Airbus and Bangladesh Satellite Company Ltd. The letter includes a clause about buying the Bangabandhu-2 Earth Observation Satellite System. Bangladesh's first satellite Bangabandhu-1 was also manufactured by a French company.

Besides, a credit facility agreement was also signed with Agence Française de Développement, under which France will provide EUR 184 million to support urban governance and infrastructural development, in Bangladesh's railway sector, among others.

Current bilateral trade between the two countries stands at EUR 4.9 billion.

Afterwards, the French President left Dhaka at 2:45 pm on September 11, ending his 19-hour trip.

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It may be mentioned here, this is Macron's first visit to Bangladesh and second visit of any French president as former President Mitterrand visited Bangladesh on February 20-24, in 1990.

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