

C919 takes to the skies



China's first domestically produced passenger plane completes a high-speed taxi test for the first time in Shanghai, April 16, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The much-anticipated C919, a single-aisle homegrown passenger jet, will take to the skies for a debut flight on May 5, 2017. The first-time occasion will occur at the Shanghai Pudong International Airport, according to the Shanghai-based manufacturer of the C919, Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC).

The C919 is a commercial aircraft, built for medium-haul flights, with up to 174 seats and a twin engine. The aircraft will be expected to compete with the updated Airbus A320neo and the new-generation B737 MAX.

Lin Zhijie, an aviation industry analyst and columnist at Carnoc.com, one of China's largest civil aviation web portals, estimated the C919 aircraft would be put into operation between 2020 and 2022.

So far, 23 clients of COMAC have placed 570 orders for the C919, including domestic airlines such as Air China, China Southern and China Eastern, and Hainan Airlines and Sichuan Airlines.

Overseas orders also account for about 10 percent of the total, including airlines from Germany and Thailand, and others from the Asia Pacific region and Africa.