

Iran's space agency 'interested' in cooperating with NASA

October 4 2016, by Nasser Karimi



The head of Iran's space agency, Mohsen Bahrami, speaks during a news conference at his office, in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2016. Speaking to reporters at the start of World Space Week, Bahrami said his country is

interested in cooperating with NASA. Iran has long harbored ambitions to launch satellites to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation. The U.S. and its allies are concerned the same technology could be used to develop long-range missiles. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

The head of Iran's space agency said Tuesday his country is interested in cooperating with NASA.

Speaking to reporters at the start of World Space Week, Mohsen Bahrami said that "many in the world look at NASA's programs. We are interested in having cooperation, naturally. When you are in orbit, there is no country and race."

It was the first time Iran had expressed such interest since signing last summer's landmark nuclear deal with world powers.

Bahrami said, however, that cooperation will only be possible with the agreement of leaders of both countries. He emphasized that Iran has a peaceful and powerful civil space program. "We have capabilities and we are part of an international scene," he said.

Iran has begun negotiations on technical cooperation with the space agencies of various European countries, as well as Russia, China and Japan, Bahrami said. He also said Iran had started negotiating with international satellite operators.

Iran has long harbored ambitions to put its own satellites into orbit to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation, improve telecommunications and expand military surveillance. The U.S. and its allies worry that the same technology could be used to develop long-range missiles.



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Iran's Defense Ministry, which is in charge of launching satellites, has

denied that it is using its space program to develop new weapons. Iran says it is willing to share its scientific findings and satellite data with other countries.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent dummy satellites into orbit. Bahrami said Iran plans to send three domestically-made mini-satellites into a low Earth orbit by early 2018. At least three Iranian universities are working to develop satellites, sponsored by the Iranian space agency.

In 2013, Iran sent a monkey into space and set up its first space tracking center to monitor objects passing in orbit overhead.

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