

Iran says it is preparing for satellite launch

January 19 2020



In this July 27, 2017, file photo, released by the official website of the Iranian Defense Ministry, claims to show the Simorgh satellite-carrying rocket at Imam Khomeini National Space Center in an undisclosed location, Iran. Iran said Sunday, Jan. 19, 2020, that two newly constructed satellites have passed pre-launch tests and will be transported to the nation's space center for eventual launch, without elaborating. (Iranian Defense Ministry via AP, File)

Iran said Sunday that two newly constructed satellites have passed pre-launch tests and will be transported to the nation's space center for eventual launch, without elaborating.

Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi tweeted about the development, calling it an "important research step."

Iran has not said when it will launch the satellites, but often coordinates its launches with national holidays. It will celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution next month.

Iran's largely state-run media say the 90-kilogram (200-pound) Zafar satellites each have four high-resolution color cameras and will monitor and transmit data on natural resources as well as agricultural and environmental developments.

Iran says its satellite program, like its nuclear activities, is aimed at [scientific research](#) and other civilian applications. The U.S. and other Western countries have long been suspicious of the program because the same technology can be used to develop long-range missiles.

Iran tried and failed to launch two satellites into orbit in January and February last year.

A rocket exploded inside the Imam Khomeini Space Center in August during what officials later said was a test-launch. Iranian officials did not acknowledge the mishap until [satellite](#) imagery showed the explosion. Officials blamed a technical malfunction.

In a separate incident, a fire killed three researchers at the [space center](#), which is some 240 kilometers (150 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran.

Iran has sent several satellites into orbit over the past decade, and in 2013 it launched a monkey into space.

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