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# Iran to Sign New Nuclear Power Plant Deal with Russia - Minister

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Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, Iran's first Iran's nuclear program: civilian purposes or nuclear weapons?

TEHRAN, August 11 (RIA Novosti) - Iran intends to sign an agreement with Russia soon on the construction of a new nuclear power plant in the Islamic Republic, Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency reported on Sunday, citing Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi.

'Iran has held consultations with the Russian side and soon an agreement of mutual understanding will be signed on the construction of a new nuclear power plant,' Mehr quoted Salehi as saying.

Iran's foreign minister said the Islamic Republic needed nuclear power for electricity generation, and also for medicine.

Iran's newly-elected President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday during his first press conference after his inauguration that the Islamic Republic would continue negotiations with Russia on nuclear power development in the country.

Rouhani said Iran needed to produce 20,000 MW of nuclear power and planned to build new nuclear power plants and continue cooperation in this sphere, in particular, with Russia.

Russian parliament speaker Sergei Naryshkin said on August 4 during his visit to Iran to attend Rouhani's inauguration ceremony that Russia hoped for holding consultations with Iran on expanding cooperation in civilian nuclear power after the Islamic Republic's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr was fully commissioned in September.

Western countries suspect Iran of using its nuclear program to develop atomic weapons capability, a claim Iran has consistently denied. Tehran claims it needs atomic technology for producing electricity, although it has some of the world's largest reserves of oil and gas.

Construction of Bushehr began in the 1970s, but has been plagued by delays. Russia signed a billion-dollar deal with Tehran to complete the plant in 1998.

Iran's foreign minister said in February Tehran expected to start joint work with Russia on a second power unit at Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant.

'We hope to start building the second unit with our Russian colleagues,'

he told journalists at a news conference.

Salehi said Russia was Tehran's preferred partner in the construction of Iran's second nuclear power plant, local media reported.

The Bushehr plant's launch in August 2010 prompted Israel and other nations to express fear that the reactor could help Iran create an atomic bomb. Tehran has denied the allegations, saying the facility was used for peaceful power generation only.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130811/182707490/Iran-to-Sign-New-Nuclear-Power-Plant-Deal-with-Russia--Minister.html>

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