

Iran has stopped dismantling nuclear centrifuges: senior official

DUBAI



A Russian worker walks past the Bushehr nuclear power plant, 1,200 km (746 miles) south of Tehran October 26, 2010.
REUTERS/MEHR NEWS AGENCY/MAJID ASGARIPOUR

Iran has stopped dismantling centrifuges in two uranium enrichment plants, state media reported on Tuesday, days after conservative lawmakers complained to President Hassan Rouhani that the process was too rushed.

Last week, Iran announced it had begun shutting down inactive centrifuges at the Natanz and Fordow plants under the terms of a deal struck with world powers in July that limits its nuclear program in exchange for easing sanctions.

Iran's hardliners continue to resist and undermine the nuclear deal, which was forged by moderates they oppose and which they see as a capitulation to the West.

"The (dismantling) process stopped with a warning," Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of the National Security Council, was quoted as saying by the ISNA student news agency.

Only decommissioned centrifuges were being dismantled to begin with, of which there were about 10,000 at Natanz and Fordow, the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran has said.

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Shamkhani did not specify what he meant by "warning", but the head of parliament's nuclear deal commission, Alireza Zakani, told Mehr news agency that the dismantling had stopped in Fordow because of the lawmakers' letter to Rouhani.

Zakani, who was not one of the signatories of the letter, did not mention activities at Natanz.

A group of 20 hardline parliamentarians wrote to the president last week complaining that the deactivation of centrifuges contradicted the directives of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Khamenei has said that the deal should only be implemented once allegations of past military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's nuclear program had been settled.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is expected to announce its conclusions on PMD by Dec. 15.

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Centrifuges spin at supersonic speed to increase the ratio of the fissile isotope in uranium. Low-enriched uranium is used to fuel nuclear power plants, Iran's stated goal, but can also provide material for bombs if refined much further.

Iran denied Western suspicions it was aiming to build a nuclear bomb.

(Reporting by Bozorgmehr Sharafedin; Editing by Yara Bayoumy and [Raissa Kasolowsky](#))

Iran nuclear deal: Centrifuge decommissioning 'begins'

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- From the section [Middle East](#)

Iran has begun to decommission uranium enrichment centrifuges in order to fulfil the nuclear deal struck with six world powers in July, its nuclear chief has announced during a visit to Japan.

Ali Akbar Salehi said initial work to reduce the number of centrifuges had started, but would take some time.

Iran insists that its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

The July agreement involves the lifting of sanctions in return for Iran curbing sensitive nuclear activities.

The deal between the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - was reached after 20 months of negotiations.

Image caption Hardliners in both Iran and the US are opposed to the deal

Image caption Iran's highest authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, conditionally approved the nuclear deal last month
Mr Salehi was quoted by [Japan's Kyodo news agency](#) as saying that work had begun on reducing the number of active centrifuge machines.

They are key to the process of enriching uranium, and limiting their number is a central part of the deal.

Confirmation that the work is underway also appears to have come in a separate development in Tehran.

About 20 hardline MPs have written to President Hassan Rouhani to complain that work to dismantle centrifuges in two enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordow is progressing too quickly.

Iran's highest authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, conditionally approved the nuclear deal last month.

The Iranian parliament also approved the deal last month, as did the US Congress, after Republicans failed to block the accord.

Image caption The nuclear deal came after long negotiations

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The UN Security Council passed seven resolutions between 2006 and 2015 requiring Iran to stop producing enriched uranium - which can be used for civilian purposes, but also to build nuclear bombs.

Four of the resolutions imposed sanctions in an effort to persuade Iran to comply.

Key areas of the nuclear deal:

Uranium enrichment: Iran can operate 5,060 first generation centrifuges, configured to enrich uranium to 3.67%, a level well below that needed to make an atomic weapon. It can also operate up to 1,000 centrifuges at its mountain facility at Fordow - but these cannot be used to enrich uranium.

Plutonium production: Iran has agreed to reconfigure its heavy water reactor at Arak, so that it will only produce a tiny amount of plutonium as a by-product of power generation, and will not build any more heavy water reactors for 15 years.

Inspections: International monitors will be able to carry out a comprehensive programme of inspection of Iran's nuclear facilities.

Possible military dimensions: Iran will allow foreign inspectors to investigate the so-called "possible military dimensions" to its programme by December. This should determine whether the country ever harboured military ambitions for its nuclear programme - a claim it has always strenuously denied.

Sanctions: All EU and US energy, economic and financial sanctions, and most UN sanctions, will be lifted on the day Iran shows it has complied with the main parts of the deal.

Iran's top Guardian Council approves nuclear bill

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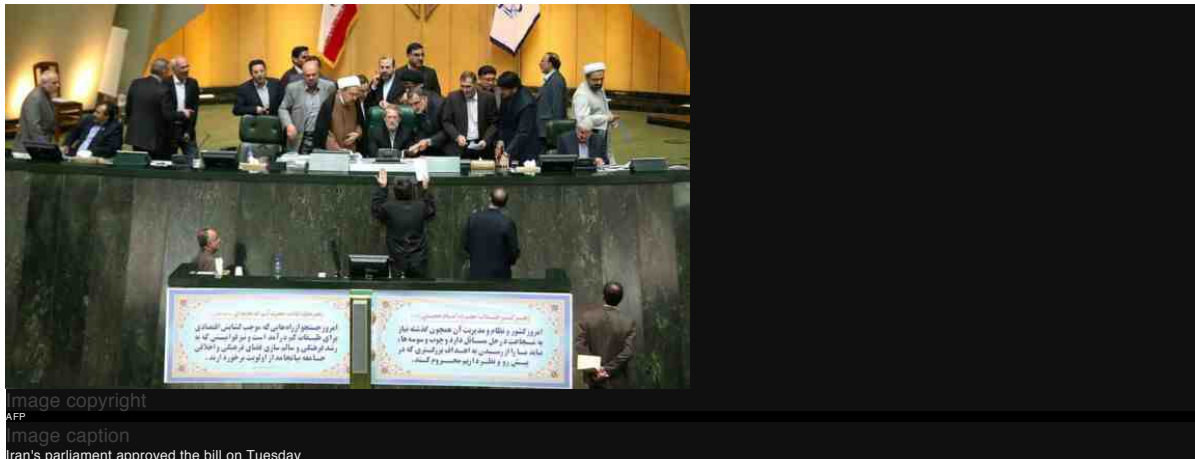


Image copyright AFP

Image caption Iran's parliament approved the bill on Tuesday

Iran's powerful Guardian Council has approved a deal on its nuclear programme agreed with six world powers, state media reports.

The council's spokesman said they did not find the bill "to be against religious law and the constitution," Fars news agency reports. The bill is now set to become law. Parliament approved it on Tuesday. Under the deal, Iran will curb its nuclear activities in return for the lifting of Western sanctions. The deal was struck in July between Iran and the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - after 20 months of negotiations. It has been met with fierce opposition from hardliners in both Iran and the US.

What's the Iran nuclear deal?

Under the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**, Iran has agreed to drastically reduce the number of its centrifuges used to enrich uranium, to cap its stockpile and turn one of its two uranium plants into a research centre. It has also agreed to reconfigure its heavy water reactor at Arak so it will not produce weapons-grade plutonium. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency will also be allowed in, and it is only when they have confirmed Iran is fulfilling its part of the deal that Western sanctions will be lifted. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani told state media on Tuesday he expected sanctions to be lifted within "no more than a month or two" of the JCPOA being fully implemented.

Iran's nuclear facilities



Source: New Scientist/ Global Security

What has been the reaction to the deal?

President Rouhani hailed the deal as **opening a new chapter for Iran's relations with the world**, while US President Barack Obama said **"every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off"** for Iran. But hardliners in both Iran and the US have been vocal in their opposition to any deal that brings their countries closer. Last month, US Republicans failed in their attempt to block the accord in Congress. Hawkish politicians in Iran sought to prevent its approval in parliament on Tuesday, with state media saying **some were seen crying** when the bill was passed by 161 lawmakers, with 59 voting against and 13 abstaining. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who has the ultimate say over Iranian affairs, has not made clear his views on the deal, saying only that **"we negotiated with Americans to serve our interests"**.