

# Iran's sole nuclear power plant undergoes emergency shutdown

Sun, 2021-06-20 20:30

TEHRAN: Iran's sole nuclear power plant has undergone an unexplained temporary emergency shutdown, state TV reported on Sunday.

An official from the state electric energy company, Gholamali Rakhshanimehr, said on a talk show that the Bushehr plant shutdown began on Saturday and would last "for three to four days."

He said that power outages could result. He did not elaborate but this is the first time Iran has reported an emergency shutdown of the plant, located in the southern port city of Bushehr. It went online in 2011 with help from Russia. Iran is required to send spent fuel rods from the reactor back to Russia as a nuclear nonproliferation measure.

In March, nuclear official Mahmoud Jafari said the plant could stop working since Iran cannot procure parts and equipment for it from Russia due to banking sanctions imposed by the US in 2018.

Bushehr is fueled by uranium produced in Russia, not Iran, and is monitored by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency. The IAEA did not immediately respond to request for comment on the reported shutdown.

Construction on Bushehr, on the coast of the northern reaches of the Arabian Gulf, began under Iran's shah in the mid-1970s. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the plant was repeatedly targeted in the Iran-Iraq war. Russia later completed construction of the facility.

The plant, which sits near active fault lines and was built to withstand powerful quakes, has been periodically shaken by temblors. There have been no significant earthquakes reported in the area in recent days.



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## [Decision time on Iran nuclear deal 'approaching fast,' says European diplomat](#)

Sun, 2021-06-20 18:38

VIENNA: Talks on reviving a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers cannot continue indefinitely and a decision needs to be made soon, a senior diplomat from the 'E3' grouping of France, Germany and Britain said on Sunday.

"We continue to make progress but we still need to resolve the most difficult issues. As we have stated before, time is on nobody's side. These talks cannot be open ended," the diplomat said

"Delegations will now travel to capitals in order to consult with their leadership. We urge all sides to return to Vienna and be ready to conclude a deal. The time for decision is fast approaching."

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday opened his first Cabinet meeting since swearing in his new coalition government last week with a condemnation of the new Iranian president.

He said Iran's presidential election was a sign for world powers to "wake up" before returning to a nuclear agreement with Tehran.

Iran's hard-line judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, was elected Saturday with 62% of the vote amid a historically low voter turnout.

He is sanctioned by the US in part over his involvement in the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners in 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Raisi has not commented specifically on the event.

\* *With AP and Reuters*



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## [Israel launches official probe into deadly festival stampede](#)

Author:

AP

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1624192530686096400

Sun, 2021-06-20 12:30

JERUSALEM: Israel's government approved Sunday the establishment of an independent state commission of inquiry into a deadly disaster at a Jewish holy site in April that left 45 people dead.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said the commission would investigate major safety shortcomings that led to a deadly stampede at Lag Baomer celebrations on Mount Meron.

It will be headed by a current or former senior judge, and its members selected by the country's chief Supreme Court justice.

Some 100,000 people, mostly ultra-Orthodox Jews, gathered for the April 29 holiday festival in northern Israel despite coronavirus restrictions limiting outdoor assemblies to 500 people, and longstanding warnings about the safety of such gatherings. The state comptroller's office had previously issued a pair of reports in 2008 and 2011 warning that the conditions at Mount Meron were dangerous.

Hundreds of people funneled through a narrow passageway descending the mountain's holy site during the festival. A slippery slope caused people to stumble and fall, precipitating a human avalanche that killed 45 people and injured at least 150.

The police launched an investigation into the disaster, but to date have yet to make any arrests.

The government said the commission would investigate the officials "who made the decisions that led to approving the event and determining the framework that was approved and its terms."

Powerful ultra-Orthodox politicians reportedly pressured Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other government officials to lift attendance restrictions at the religious festival.

Experts had long warned the Mount Meron complex was inadequately equipped to handle the enormous crowds that flock there during the springtime holiday, and that existing infrastructure was a safety risk.

Netanyahu's political allies, including ultra-Orthodox lawmakers, walked out on a Knesset committee hearing that discussed forming an investigation last month. Families of the mostly ultra-Orthodox victims of the disaster had

called on Netanyahu to take action and form an independent state commission to investigate the incident.

Bennett said at the start of his newly formed government's first Cabinet meeting that "the responsibility is on our shoulders to learn the lessons to prevent the disaster to come."

"The commission cannot bring back those who died, but the government can do everything to prevent an unnecessary loss in the future," he said.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz, one of the ministers who advanced the motion to launch the commission, said in a statement: "We must make sure that a tragedy of this nature never repeats itself. The taskforce's purpose is, above anything else, to save human life."



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## [New compensation offer made over Suez Canal blockage – lawyer](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1624189380365849900

Sun, 2021-06-20 11:31

ISMAILIA: The owners of a giant container ship that blocked the Suez Canal in March have made a new offer in a compensation dispute with the canal authority, a lawyer for the authority said on Sunday.

The Ever Given container ship has been anchored in a lake between two stretches of the canal since it was dislodged on March 29. It had been grounded across the canal for six days, blocking hundreds of ships and disrupting global trade.

The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) demanded \$916 million in compensation to cover salvage efforts, reputational damage and lost revenue, before publicly lowering the request to \$550 million.

The Ever Given's Japanese owners Shoei Kisen and its insurers have disputed the claim and the ship's detention under an Egyptian court order.

Negotiations had been continuing until Saturday, SCA lawyer Khaled Abu Bakr told a court hearing in Ismailia over the ship's detention.

The ship's owners had put in a new offer, he said, without giving details.

The SCA's chairman previously said Shoei Kisen had offered to pay \$150 million.

The court had been due to rule on the case on Sunday but Shoei Kisen's legal team asked for a postponement to allow more time for negotiations, one of their lawyers said.

This week UK Club, one of the ship's insurers, said it was engaged in "serious and constructive negotiations" with the SCA, and was "hopeful of a positive resolution to these negotiations in the near future."



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Ever Given: Suez authority cites navigation rules in legal dispute Suez Canal Authority showing 'full flexibility' in Ever Given compensation talks

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## [Rocket targets Iraq base hosting US troops: security source](#)

Sun, 2021-06-20 14:32

BAGHDAD: At least one Katyusha rocket fell close to the perimeter of a military base that hosts US troops in northern Iraq on Sunday, Iraq's military said.

The rocket fell near the sprawling Ain al-Asad air base in western Anbar province but did not explode, the military said in a statement.

There was no significant damage, the statement said. An Iraqi security official said a fence at the perimeter of the base was minimally damaged. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

An investigation by security forces found the projectile had been launched from the nearby al-Baghdadi area.

The attack is the latest targeting the American presence in Iraq. Rockets and, more recently, drones have targeted military bases hosting US troops and the US Embassy in the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad.

The regular assaults have been described as disruptive by US contractors working on military bases. Recently, Lockheed Martin relocated its F-16 maintenance teams, citing security concerns.

The US and Iraq are negotiating a timeline for foreign troops to withdraw from the country. Talks began under the former administration of Donald Trump and resumed after President Joe Biden assumed office.



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