**302 Iran Claims to Launch Live Monkey into Space**


In this undated image taken from AP Television, scientists in Iran surround a monkey ahead of a space launch.

III ran said on Monday it had launched a live monkey into space, seeking to show off missile delivery systems that are alarming to the West given Tehran's parallel advances in nuclear technology.

The defense ministry announced the launch as world powers sought to agree a date and venue with Iran for resuming talks to resolve a nuclear standoff with the West before it degenerates into a new Middle East war.

Efforts to nail down a new meeting have failed repeatedly and the powers fear Iran is exploiting the diplomatic vacuum to hone the means to produce nuclear weapons.

The Islamic Republic denies seeking weapons capability and says it seeks only electricity from its uranium enrichment so it can export more of its oil wealth.

The powers have proposed new talks in February, a spokesman for the European Union's foreign policy chief said on Monday, hours after Russia urged all concerned to "stop behaving like children" and commit to a meeting.

Iran earlier in the day denied media reports of a major explosion at one of its most sensitive, underground enrichment plants, describing them as Western propaganda designed to influence the nuclear talks.

A defense ministry said the space launch of the monkey coincided ``with the days of'' the Prophet Mohammad's birthday, which was last week, but gave no date, according to a statement carried by the official news agency IRNA.

The launch was "another giant step" in space technology and biological research "which is the monopoly of a few countries," the statement said.

The monkey was sent up in a Kavoshgar rocket dubbed "Pishgam" (Pioneer), reaching a height of more than 120 km (75 miles), IRNA said.

"This shipment returned safely to Earth with the anticipated speed along with the live organism," Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi told the semi-official Fars news agency.
"The launch of Kavoshgar and its retrieval is the first step towards sending humans into space in the next phase."

Iran's English-language Press TV displayed photographs of the monkey inside its capsule, but did not say if these were from before or after the launch.

There was no independent confirmation of the launch.

**Vragen bij leestekst:**

1. Lees de titel en bekijk het plaatje. Waar denk je dat deze tekst over gaat?
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2. Lees alinea 1. Waarom heeft Iran dit aapje in de ruimte gelanceerd?
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Iran is nu al enige tijd in het nieuws omdat het zelfstandig uranium (stof die gebruikt wordt voor nucleaire bommen) produceert. Andere landen zijn bang dat Iran een nucleaire bom aan het bouwen is.

3. In alinea 2 wordt de term “nuclear standoff” gebruikt. Wat betekent dit?
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4. In de 4de alinea geeft Iran zelf een reden waarom ze uranium produceren. Noem deze reden.
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Toen eerder die dag de media meldden dat ze een explosie hadden gehoord bij een ondergrondse reactor, ontkende Iran de explosie en noemde de melding: “Western propaganda designed to influence the nuclear talks.”

5. Vertaal deze zin en leg uit wat Iran ermee bedoeld.
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6. In alinea 8 wordt gesproken over “another giant step”.
Naar welke eerdere toespraak over de ruimte wordt hiermee verwezen?
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7. Weten we zeker of het aapje de lancering heeft overleefd? Waarom wel/niet?
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