

Report: Bushehr Plant Suffers New Setback

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Iran unloaded nuclear fuel from its first atomic power plant last month, a United Nations report said Friday, a few months after the Russian builder said the long-postponed reactor was operating at full capacity.

The Bushehr plant is a symbol of what the Islamic Republic says is its peaceful nuclear ambitions, disputed by the West, and any new hitch would probably be seen as an embarrassment both for Tehran and Moscow, whose experts help run it.

The transfer of fuel assemblies from the reactor core to a spent fuel pond meant the plant was shut down, a diplomat familiar with the issue said. "It was certainly not foreseen, that's for sure," he said.

The reason for the unexpected move was unclear, but it could be a sign of a new problem in running the Russian-built, 1,000-megawatt reactor near the Gulf city of Bushehr.

On Nov. 6-7, "the agency conducted an inspection of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant and verified that the fuel assemblies were in the spent fuel pond," the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report on Iran's nuclear program, giving no further details on the matter.

Bushehr was plugged into Iran's national grid in September 2011, a move intended to end years of delays and perceptions that Moscow was using the project as a diplomatic lever to extract Iranian agreement on other issues.

In August this year, Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom said it was fully operational.

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