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Iran tests new missiles ahead of nuclear talks

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Reuters in Ankara, Turkey

Iran's military has successfully test-fired two new domestically made missiles, the defence minister said according to state television, ahead of talks with world powers to try to reach an agreement on curbing Tehran's nuclear programme.

Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said on Monday that one of them was a long-range ballistic missile with radar-evading capabilities.

"The new generation of long-range ground-to-ground ballistic missiles with a fragmentation warhead and the laser-guided air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles dubbed Bina [Insightful] have been successfully test-fired," state television quoted him as saying.

"The Bina missile is capable of striking important targets such as bridges, tanks and enemy command centres with great precision," he added.

Iran already has long-range surface-to-surface Shahab missiles with a range of 2,000 kilometres that are capable of reaching Israel and US military bases in the Middle East. But analysts have challenged some of Iran's military assertions, saying it often exaggerates its capabilities.

President Hassan Rowhani issued a message saying: "Iran's children successfully test-fired a new generation of missiles," the TV station reported.

The decision to carry out the test may be a sign of Iran's political infighting. Rowhani was criticised by a group of hardline lawmakers on Sunday for blocking a planned missile exercise. But it was not clear whether the test on Monday was the same one.

Iran and six world powers struck an interim deal in November under which Tehran agreed to limit parts of its nuclear work in return for the easing of some international sanctions.

Iran and the six powers will start negotiating a full agreement in Vienna on February 18.

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