

## Tehran solar energy storage

The Iranian Energy Ministry announced, last week, a plan to add another 10GW of renewable energy capacity over the next four years as part of an overall strategy to deploy 30GW of power generation capacity.

On Sunday, the ministry and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) signed a memorandum of understanding with unspecified private investors to implement the plan and announced their intention to allocate around IRR30 trillion (\$71.4 million) in the next budget law to move forward with the first projects.

Iran has an installed renewable energy power generation capacity of around 900MW, of which about 414MW is represented by solar installations. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, the country installed around 50MW of new PV power in 2020 and around 90MW in 2019.

Despite a feed-in-tariff scheme for large scale PV and a net metering mechanism for rooftop PV, Iran's solar energy development has remained below expectations since the real market inception, in 2016. Solar developers active in the country had to deal with two main issues: difficult access to financing and re-imposed sanctions by former U.S. President Donald Trump.

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Dec. 23 saw the inauguration of a new solar cell factory in the city of Khomeini, according to the Iranian government's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization. The factory, operated by Tehran headquartered company Mana Energy Pak, will be among the first in the region to produce silicon solar cells.

Last week saw the opening of a 150MW silicon cell production line close to the city of Khomeini in western Iran. An announcement from the government's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) states that the factory was inaugurated in a ceremony attended by Iran's Minister of Energy Ali Akbar Mehrabian, and other officials.

Mehrabian stated that with this factory and cooperation from others in the renewable energy sector, Iran would be able to set higher targets for renewable energy in its development plans. "Today, in response to questions

related to the effects of fossil energy use, including water and fuel consumption, pollution,... it can be noted that the development of renewable energy is the answer to all these questions,&#8221; the minister said at the event.

The factory is operated by Tehran-headquartered company Mana Energy Pak. The company's website states that it has additionally purchased a factory able to produce 1.2GW of multi- and monocrystalline wafers per year, without mentioning the location of this factory. It also states that it has operated a 250MW production line for PV modules at the site near Khomeini since early 2020. According to SATBA, further phases already under construction will increase the factory's PV module capacity to 1.5GW by the end of 2023.

The factory will be the first in Iran or the wider Middle East region to produce silicon solar cells. Though several countries in the region have made big steps in developing renewable energy projects, and there has been some appetite for local manufacturing, this has so far not grown beyond a few module assembly facilities.

Iran generates the majority of its energy from oil and gas and has not met a target of 5% renewables by the end of 2021. In November, however, SATBA issued a call for proposals for up to 10 GW of new renewables generation capacity to be built over the next four years. In early December, the organization reported that it had received more than 80 GW worth of proposals.

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Web: <https://www.hollanddutchtours.nl/contact-us/>

Email: [energystorage2000@gmail.com](mailto:energystorage2000@gmail.com)

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

