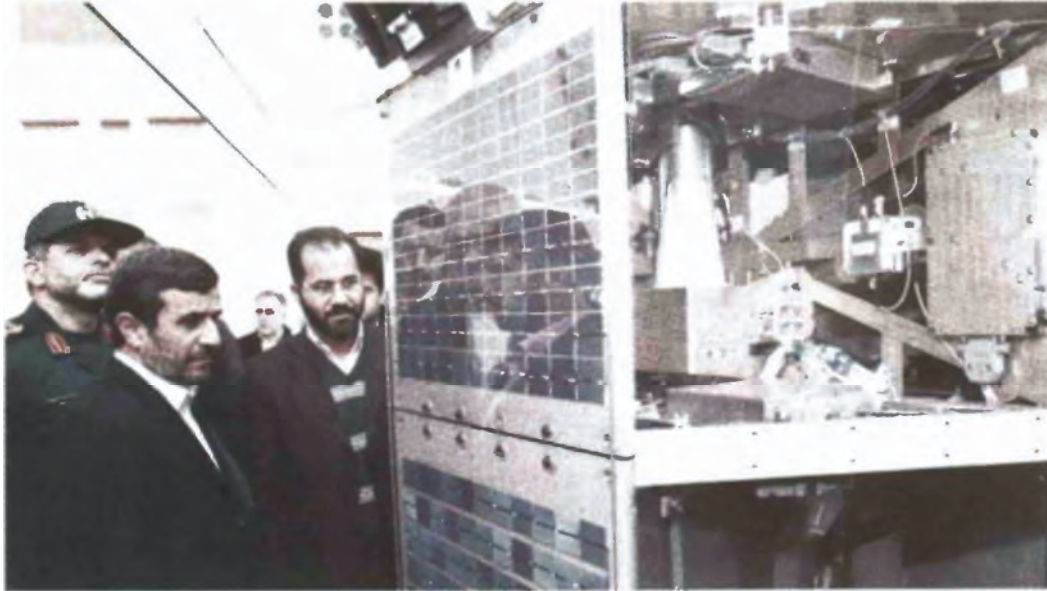


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IRANIAN PRESIDENT Mahmoud Ahmadinejad views an exhibit promoting the country's aerospace achievements yesterday in Teheran. (Iranian Defense Ministry/AP)

Iran unveils four new satellites

Move seen as a 'major breakthrough' for Teheran

• By YAAKOV KATZ

Iran made an impressive step forward in its space efforts on Monday, introducing four new domestically produced satellites as part of a program that is moving ahead despite international sanctions and boycotts.

State TV showed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiling the satellites – Fajr, Rasad, Zafar and Amir Kabir-1 – on Monday at a ceremony in Teheran. The report described them as research satellites but did not provide details. Iran says it has launched at least two satellites, but does not have any currently in orbit.

Israel fears that Iran's space program could bolster its ballistic missile program and capabilities.

According to Tal Inbar, head of the Space Research Center at Israel's [Fisher Institute](#) for Air and Space Strategic Studies, the new satellites are significant and demonstrate Iran's impressive and growing space capabilities.

"We are seeing a major breakthrough for the Iranians," Inbar said. "They are currently working on nine different satellites. They are thorough and demonstrate impressive results."

On Saturday the country showed off a sophisticated ground station for the satel-

lites, while last week it unveiled a new launch site that can facilitate 40-meter-long missiles.

Inbar added that if the Iranians succeed in launching satellites into space, the same missile technology could be applied for military purposes, for example with nuclear warheads.

"If they are good at launching satellites, they can also launch missiles for military purposes," he said. "The Iranians understand that space is important, and it is only a matter of time before they have more sophisticated satellites. They are ready for business."

AP contributed to this report.