

Iran's coronavirus death toll rises to 1,433

March 20 2020

Iran said Friday that coronavirus has killed 149 more people in the Islamic republic, raising the country's official death toll from the disease to 1,433.

Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raisi said 1,237 more cases have been confirmed over the past 24 hours and 19,644 people are now known to have been infected in Iran, one of the world's worst-hit countries.

The latest figures come as Iranians celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year which ushers in a two-week holiday during which Iran's roads are normally filled with people visiting family.

The authorities had urged the public to avoid family visits or days out this year to stem the spread of the [coronavirus](#).

But footage aired by state television showed hundreds of vehicles pouring out of Tehran on Thursday evening.

Remote sensors installed at tollbooths checked the body temperatures of motorists and their passengers, but there was no mass stay-home as called for by the authorities.

Raisi defended Iran's reluctance to resort to the sort of "coercive powers" granted to police in France and Italy to force people off the streets.

He said checkpoints had been set up around major cities to test

suspected cases and that those found positive were being sent home to self-quarantine.

That contrasted with earlier guidance from the government which had said that anyone suspected of having COVID-19 would be quarantined.

In holiday messages broadcast on Friday, both supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani promised that Iran would overcome the outbreak.

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