

Iran reports 96 virus deaths but says infections drop

April 27 2020



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Iran on Monday announced 96 deaths from the novel coronavirus, but said daily confirmed new infections fell below 1,000 for the first time in more than a month.

The latest fatalities recorded in the past 24 hours brought the overall [death](#) toll to 5,806, said health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour.

Detected cases of infection rose by 991 to total 91,472 since the start of Iran's outbreak, the deadliest in the Middle East.

In addition, Jahanpour said more than 700 people had died of poisoning in the month to April 19 after drinking alcohol in the mistaken belief it can kill the virus.

Although its sale and consumption is banned in the Islamic republic, local media have repeatedly reported fatal poisonings from contraband alcohol.

Iran has struggled to contain the [coronavirus](#) since reporting its first cases on February 19—two deaths in the Shiite holy city of Qom.

At his briefing on Sunday, Jahanpour had announced 60 virus deaths, the lowest daily toll in the country since March 10.

But the number of casualties is widely thought to be much higher than the official figures.

The government has allowed a phased reopening of shops and has lifted restrictions on movement within the country since April 11.

Schools, universities, mosques, cinemas, stadiums and other public spaces remain closed across the country, where the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan began on Saturday.

The authorities have in recent days raised the possibility of reopening mosques in little-affected areas, although they have yet to elaborate on such plans.

"We are examining the situation every four days," Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi said late Sunday, signalling the possibility that

restrictive measures could be reimposed.

"Reopening does not mean normalisation," he added.

State television on Monday broadcast footage of a highway in Tehran full of traffic.

Its journalists visited administrative offices where customers waited for service without respecting social distancing rules.

The authorities were considering making it compulsory to wear masks on public transport, Harirchi said.

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