Iran says virus deaths drop below 100 for first time in month

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Iran said on Tuesday that the number of lives lost in the country to the novel coronavirus dropped to double figures for the first time in one month.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said 98 deaths from the COVID-19 disease were recorded in the past 24 hours, bringing the overall toll to 4,683.

"Unfortunately, we lost 98 of our compatriots infected with the disease... but after a month of waiting, this is the first day that the death toll has been double figures," he told a televised news conference.

"We hope that this path will continue with your ongoing cooperation" in observing health guidelines aimed at stopping the spread of the virus, he added.

Jahanpour said another 1,574 people were found to have been infected with the virus.

That took the overall number of infections in Iran's outbreak to 74,877, he said, adding that 48,129 of those hospitalised had recovered and been discharged.

The government of President Hassan Rouhani has struggled to contain the outbreak that began nearly two months ago.

It shut schools and universities, postponed major events and imposed a range of other restrictions, but it has stopped short of ordering lockdowns.

Iran announced its first COVID-19 cases on February 19—the deaths of two people in the Shiite holy city of Qom.

But there has been speculation abroad that the real toll from the disease in the Islamic republic could be higher.

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