Iran reports 122 virus deaths, raising total to 4,232

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Iran on Friday announced another 122 deaths from the novel coronavirus, taking the overall toll in the Middle East's worst-hit country to 4,232.

The [health ministry](link) said 1,972 people tested positive for the COVID-19 virus in the past 24 hours, putting the total at 68,192.

"In the last 24 hours, we have unfortunately seen an increase in cases of disease in perhaps five to eight tourist provinces, including Tehran," spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a televised news conference.

The announcement comes a day before Iran is scheduled to reopen "low-risk" businesses in a move aimed at protecting its sanctions-hit economy.

Iran announced its first coronavirus cases on February 19.

There has been speculation abroad that the real number of deaths and infections in the country could be higher.

In response to the health crisis, Iran shut schools and universities as well as cinemas, stadiums and revered Shiite Muslim shrines.

It also warned people to refrain from travel for the Persian New Year holidays that ended last week.

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