

Iran says virus cases top 200,000

June 19 2020



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Iran said its novel coronavirus caseload passed the 200,000 mark on Friday, as authorities gave provinces the power to reimpose measures aimed at stemming the spread of the virus.

Official figures have shown an upward trajectory in new confirmed

COVID-19 cases since early May, when Iran hit a near two-month low in recorded infections.

Health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on state television that another 2,615 people in Iran had tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours.

That brought to 200,262 the [total number](#) of confirmed cases since the country's outbreak emerged four months ago.

The new cases were "a reflection of (the Iranian people's) cooperation in the past two to four weeks," said Lari, who again urged citizens to observe health protocols and social distancing.

She added that 120 fatalities in the past day had taken the overall toll to 9,392.

There has been scepticism at home and abroad about Iran's official figures, with concerns the real toll could be much higher.

Six of Iran's 31 provinces—Bushehr, Hormozgan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and West Azerbaijan—are currently "red", the highest level on the country's colour-coded risk scale.

The number was five on Thursday.

Deputy Health Minister Hossein Erfani told state television on Friday that Iran had implemented what it calls "dynamic [social distancing](#)".

The measure enabled "each [province](#) to decide for itself" regarding restrictive measures.

Iran reported its first cases on February 19 and started implementing

measures such as shutting down non-essential businesses and busy Shiite shrines to contain the virus.

But the government progressively lifted the restrictions from April in order to reopen the sanctions-hit economy.

The recent upsurge in infections—which the government insists is due to increased testing rather than a worsening outbreak—and the new powers have prompted some provinces to reimpose restrictive measures.

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