

Iran's daily COVID caseload exceeds 30,000 in new high

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Iran's daily COVID caseload crossed the 30,000 mark for the first time on Monday, its health ministry said, marking a second record daily high within a week.

In the past 24 hours, the Islamic republic registered a record 31,814 new infections to bring its total number of positive cases since the start of the pandemic to 3,723,246.

It also recorded 322 additional coronavirus-related deaths, taking the total to 89,122.

Iran's daily infections had hit a [record](#) of 27,444 last Tuesday, prompting the national virus taskforce to close down government offices and banks in Tehran and nearby Alborz provinces for several days.

Those strict measures, a first since the pandemic began, ended on Monday morning.

Iran has so far avoided imposing a full nationwide lockdown, employing instead limited measures such as temporary travel bans and business closures.

Authorities have previously admitted that the official figures do not account for all cases but those numbers still make Iran the hardest-hit country in the Middle East.

Earlier this month, outgoing President Hassan Rouhani warned of a "fifth wave" of infection fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus.

Iran has pinned its hopes on vaccinations to help with the [health](#) crisis but its inoculation campaign since early February has progressed more slowly than authorities had planned.

Iran, strangled by US sanctions that have made it difficult to transfer money to foreign firms, says it is struggling to import vaccines.

The authorities have approved the emergency use of two locally produced vaccines, with the only mass-produced one, COVIran Barekat, still in short supply.

Just over 8.1 million people have received a first dose, and 2.4 million have received the necessary two jabs, the [health ministry](#) said on Monday.

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