

Iran president warns of tough new measures as virus toll tops 2,000

March 25 2020

Iran's president warned that his government was poised to introduce tough new measures against the coronavirus Wednesday as the death toll from one of the world's deadliest outbreaks topped 2,000.

President Hassan Rouhani said that the new measures, which could be adopted as soon as Wednesday evening, included Iran's first restrictions on movement to try to stem the spread of the virus and were likely to be "difficult" for the public.

So far, Iran has resisted imposing any lockdown, choosing instead to rely on verbal appeals for people to stay home.

But those have been widely ignored. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians took to the roads as usual last weekend to spend the two-week Persian New Year holiday with family despite fears of the disease spreading from the big cities to the countryside.

"There has been a long debate within the National Committee for Fighting the Coronavirus about how to strengthen the measures we have taken," Rouhani said in televised comments to the cabinet.

"We need to step up those measures," he said, adding that the [health ministry](#) had "presented the committee with a plan" that could be "approved and published" during the day.

"It may create problems for people's travel plans and require that people

return home early," the president said.

"It could stop the next wave of journeys. People have to realise that these are [difficult decisions](#) that are being taken to protect people's lives.

"But we have no choice, because the lives of Iranians are important to us."

Rouhani said the new measures would be adopted for 15 days and would be "implemented thoroughly until Saturday, April 4," the day when children normally return to school after the holiday.

Iran on Wednesday announced 143 new deaths from the novel [coronavirus](#), raising the official [death toll](#) to 2,077 in one of the world's worst-hit countries.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said "our colleagues have registered 2,206 new cases of COVID-19 infection" in the past 24 hours, bringing total infections to 27,017.

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