

Iran virus deaths top 5,000: ministry

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Iran on Saturday announced 73 new deaths from the coronavirus, raising the official toll to 5,031 as the government allowed small businesses to reopen in Tehran as they already have in the provinces.

It was the seventh day that the number of deaths in the previous 24 hours had fallen.

It was also the fifth straight day that the number of new deaths had stayed in double figures, ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a news conference.

"This (73) is a very low number compared to recent days," he said, hoping the [downward trend](#) would continue.

Jahanpour said the "small victory" against the [coronavirus](#) had been won despite "enmities" towards Iran.

He claimed that US sanctions had prevented Iran from buying virus testing kits from South Korea, but gave no further details.

"This is despite all their false claims that trade in

medicines is not covered by the sanctions," he said.

"The world will judge such actions."

Jahanpour added that 1,374 new infections had been confirmed in the previous 24 hours, taking the total to 80,860.

Of those admitted to hospital, 55,987 have recovered and been discharged, while 3,513 remain in critical condition.

According to a parliamentary report, the published figures are based only on those hospitalised with "severe symptoms".

The report said the real [death](#) toll was estimated to be as much as 80 percent higher and infections "eight to 10 times" higher.

The health ministry has confirmed the numbers may be higher due to limited testing.

Tehran city councillor Nahid Khodakarami told the Shargh newspaper on Wednesday that the daily death toll in the capital ranged between 70 and more than 100.

But a member of the national coronavirus taskforce, Masoud Mardani, dismissed the claim, stressing that "not every respiratory disease is coronavirus."

Iran has struggled to contain the outbreak and keep Iran's sanctions-hit economy running.

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

The government allowed [small businesses](#) in Tehran to reopen on Saturday, following a similar move in the provinces last week.

There was a "significant" rise in the volume of traffic on the capital's streets on Saturday morning as many returned to work, Tehran's traffic police said.

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