Russia shuts borders to Iran residents over virus fears

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Russia announced plans to restrict access to people arriving from Iran on Friday, as it moves to ensure the population's safety and thwart the spread of the new coronavirus infection.

The Federal Security Service will be "temporarily halting passage through the Russian border of foreign citizens... arriving from Iran" to work study or travel in Russia, a government decree said.

The measures which start at midnight (2100 GMT Friday) aim at "stopping the spread of the new coronavirus infection on Russian territory" and protect public health, it said.

The new rules exclude people with permanent residency in Russia, nationals of countries in the Moscow-led Eurasian economic union, which includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as members of official delegations and plane crews, it said.

Russia's foreign ministry will halt accepting documents of foreign nationals applying for the Russian visa from Iran, it said.

The government ordered its aviation authority to notify Russian airlines about the ban, which impacts passengers transferring through Russian territory.

Iran earlier had announced a surge in COVID-19 cases with 17 more deaths raising the total number of people killed to 124 as the Islamic republic battles the world's deadliest outbreak of the disease outside China where it originated.

Russia on Friday announced six new cases of the COVID-19 virus infection in the country, five of which were registered in Moscow. All six recently visited Italy.

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