

Govt to ban foreign treatment

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KAMPALA. The Ministry of Health has announced that beginning next year, government will stop sending ministers, Members of Parliament and senior officials for treatment abroad.

Addressing journalists yesterday, Ms Sarah Opendi, the Health State minister in charge of general duties, said after commissioning of Mulago National Referral Hospital next year together with the 450-bed maternal hospital, the medical board will stop referring government officials abroad because the facilities will be available locally.

Govt expenditure

"We spend close to Shs30b annually on sending ministers, Members of Parliament and senior government officers for treatment abroad. This does not include those who travel for treatment privately," Ms Opendi said adding that with the new facilities in Mulago hospital, government will be saving money.

Ms Opendi explained that the new women's hospital has facilities that can treat very high profile people including the president and his cabinet ministers.

Yesterday, Dr Frank Stangenberg Haverkamp, the chairman Executive Board and Family Board, together with Dr Rasha Kelej, the chief executive officer Merck Foundation, the

owners of Merck Pharmaceuticals, Germany's largest pharmaceutical company inspected the new health facility to ascertain the kind of help they can extend to the hospital.

According to Dr Kelej, they are currently supporting infertile women in Tororo District through equipping them with information to help them deal with the situation.

Guiding them through the facility, Dr Banterana Byarugaba, the executive director of Mulago hospital, said the hospital, which will be completed next March, will reverse Uganda's medical tourism where India and Nairobi have been the major destinations.

"We shall have all the facilities here and there will be no need to go abroad, for treatment. Instead, we expect all categories of high profile people to come for treatment because this is the first and biggest facility in East and Central Africa," he said.

Improved facilities

Asked why government has been sending its officials for treatment abroad he said there were no ambient and good quality healthcare facilities to cater for the high profile Ugandans.

"Now we have a presidential suite we expect that if we get a female president and she can deliver from here. Even people in the presidential circles can be treated here," he said.