

Ebola outbreak: Uganda put on alert

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

The Ministry of Health has urged Ugandans and tourists to remain alert following the outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

On Tuesday, laboratory results confirmed two cases of the disease in the DRC western border town of Bikoro.

There have been 21 suspected cases of viral hemorrhagic fever, including 17 deaths, according to media reports.

Bikoro is about 1,945km from the Ugandan border town of Mpondwe in Kasese district.

As a measure to prevent the disease, on May 10 the health ministry issued a press release with a directive to government officials in 14 districts to reactivate Ebola district task forces to be prepared for any possible outbreak.

The districts are Kampala, Kibale, Wakiso, Bundibugyo, Kasese, Kabale and Koboko. Others are Maracha, Arua, Nebbi, Bulisa, Kanungu, Kisoro and Hoima.

These task forces are tasked with conducting a rapid assessment on the risks of importation of Ebola virus through their districts.

They are also expected to

ensure adequate community information, and intensified surveillance by frontline health workers in all health

BETWEEN THE LINES

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facilities. All passengers with history of travelling to DRC are supposed to be screened at Entebbe airport and all border entry points.

Passengers are also required to complete screening forms at screening points.

The ministry has also equipped a private medical centre at the airport to provide counselling and clinical screening of all suspects.

About Ebola

The virus spreads through direct contact with body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola.

The virus can also spread through direct contact with the blood, body fluids and tissues of infected fruit bats or primates. People can get the virus through sexual contact as well.