

Stolen govt HIV machine recovered from bar

By Taddeo Bwambale

A sh28m diagnostic machine used for automatically counting CD4 cells has been recovered from a city bar, after it was stolen from a health facility in Kampala.

Investigators from the Health Monitoring Unit, a department under State House, recovered the machine last Thursday after a tip-off from a source, as the transaction was taking place in the undisclosed bar.

Dr Jackson Ojera Abusu, the director of the unit, revealed yesterday that Police detectives had since established the health facility from which the equipment was stolen.

"Detectives have confirmed that there was a break-in and theft of a CD4 machine and a microscope from this facility. Four suspects, three in Bushenyi and another in Kampala, are in custody. There are also several others on the run," Abusu disclosed at a press briefing.

A CD4 machine is used to measure the number of CD4 cells one has in their blood. CD4 cells are a type of white blood cells that

move around the body to find and destroy bacteria, viruses, and other germs.

CD4 count tests are essential in the management of several disorders, including HIV/AIDS. Doctors use the tests to assess the strength of one's immune system in order to recommend the appropriate treatment.

Stolen drugs recovered

Meanwhile, the unit has also recovered an assortment of drugs, sundries and laboratory supplies worth sh25m from a rented apartment near Mulago National Referral Hospital.

They include 16.5 boxes of Lumartem, an anti-malarial drug; 66 boxes of gloves, 11 tins of cotrimoxazole (Septrin), 113 rolls of gauze, six boxes of intravenous cannulas and tins of paracetamol, chloroquine and metronidazole tablets, all labelled 'Government of Uganda For Public Use Only, Not For Sale'.

The items were recovered in a private house in Mulago rented by one Hassan

Gudhugo, who has since been arrested, along with his brother identified as Ayub Gudhugo and a sister, Laziya Karungi, who were all living in the house.

Abusu said the investigators were yet to establish whether the suspects were medical personnel in order to determine the charges to be preferred against them.

"If they are health workers, they will be charged with embezzlement, abuse of office or illegal possession of government stores or classified drugs," Abusu said.

Relatedly, a senior officer in Sheema district was arrested following public complaints about not receiving mosquito nets distributed to communities by the Government, officials disclosed yesterday.

The Health Monitoring Unit is encouraging the public to report cases to a toll-free line, 0800200447. Alternatively, a whistleblower can send a free SMS to 8200 to report fraud.

The Health Monitoring Unit was set up by President Yoweri Museveni to ensure accountability for all resources, human or otherwise, in the health sector.

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