

By John Musenze

EBOLA: UGANDA GETS 3 CASES AS TOLL TOPS 200 IN DRC

The health ministry has confirmed three new Ebola virus disease infections, including a health worker and a driver linked to Uganda's first patient, as neighbouring DR Congo battles a deadly outbreak that has now killed more than 200 people.

The latest infections raised Uganda's total confirmed Ebola cases to five, with a recovery and one death already recorded, which has prompted the health ministry to intensify surveillance, border screening and contact tracing in a bid to stop further transmission within the country.

In a statement released on Saturday by Prof. Charles Olaro, the director general of health services, the newly confirmed patients included a Ugandan driver who transported the country's first Ebola patient and a Ugandan health worker exposed while caring for the same patient at a health facility.

"The two cases were identified from known contacts under follow-up and both patients were already isolated and receiving treatment at designated Ebola treatment centres," Olaro said, in the statement.

According to Olaro, the third confirmed patient is a Congolese woman who travelled to Uganda from DR Congo while experiencing mild abdominal symptoms before later testing positive for Ebola after returning to Congo.

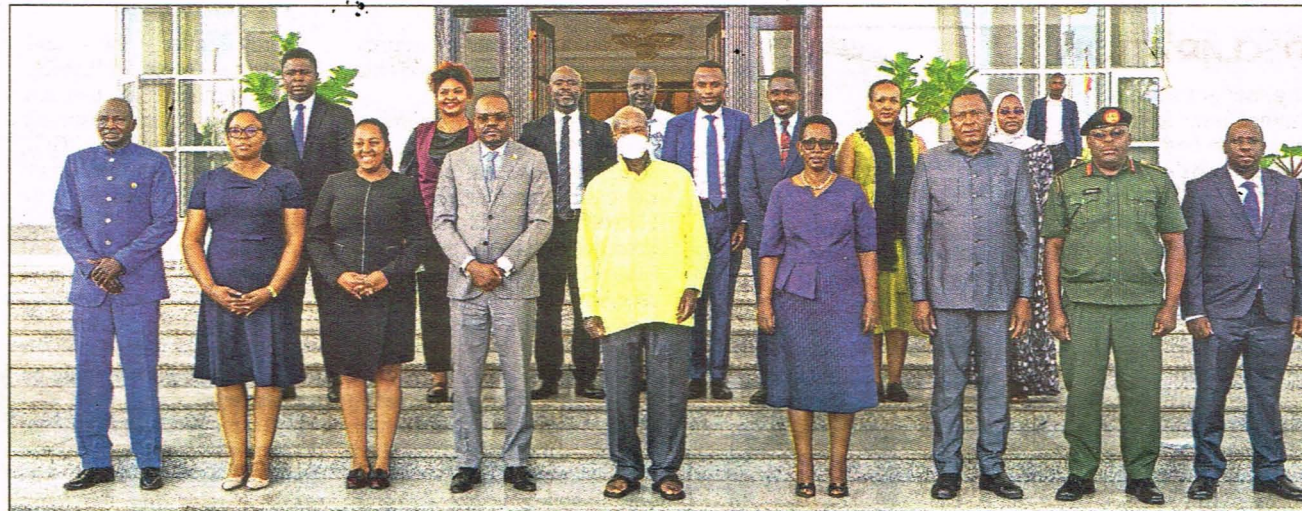
According to the ministry, the woman travelled from Arua to Entebbe aboard a chartered flight before seeking treatment at a private hospital in Kampala on May 10, where she reportedly improved and was discharged days later.

The ministry said investigations only intensified after surveillance teams received information from the pilot who transported her, triggering laboratory testing that later confirmed she had contracted Ebola during her movements between Uganda and DR Congo.

DRC DEATH TOLL RISES PAST 200

Uganda's new infections come as the Ebola outbreak in eastern DR Congo continues worsening, with Congolese health authorities updating the death toll to 204 people from 867 suspected infections recorded across three provinces.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has already declared the outbreak an international public health emergency following fears the virus may have circulated



Museveni (centre) with Kaseya (fourth-left) and his delegation during a meeting at State House Entebbe on Friday



Olaro

undetected for weeks before authorities confirmed the epidemic in eastern DR Congo.

The current outbreak involves the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, a rare and highly dangerous form of the virus for which there are currently no approved vaccines or specialised treatments, raising fears across neighbouring countries.

The outbreak was first detected in Ituri province near Uganda's border before spreading to South Kivu, regions already struggling with insecurity, armed conflict and weak public health systems that continue complicating containment efforts.

UGANDA FORTIFIES RESPONSE

The health ministry permanent secretary, Dr Diana Atwine, confirmed that all contacts linked to the confirmed five cases have already been traced and placed under close monitoring as part of wider efforts aimed at stopping local transmission and preventing community spread.

Atwine noted that rapid response teams have since been activated across

WHO SAYS SITUATION IS STABLE

Despite the new infections, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Uganda's Ebola situation remains stable because all confirmed cases have so far been linked to imported infections originating from DR Congo.

The reassurance was delivered during a high-level WHO briefing in Geneva, where Uganda updated member states on its outbreak response and the measures already implemented to prevent wider transmission inside the country.

WHO director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised Uganda's aggressive containment measures, including intensive contact tracing and cancellation of major gatherings such as this year's Martyrs Day celebrations, saying the interventions appeared to be working effectively.

The director of public health at the health ministry, Dr Daniel Kyabayinze, told the meeting that Uganda had activated response systems in all high-risk districts while maintaining transparency and close information-sharing with international health partners.

"Our transparency should be supported, not misinterpreted," Kyabayinze said, warning that misinformation and panic could negatively affect trade, tourism and livelihoods, despite Uganda's continued efforts to contain the outbreak.

high-risk districts while surveillance operations have been intensified at border points, health facilities and communities with direct movement links to eastern DR Congo.

The ministry confirmed that isolation and treatment centres have also been established at Mulago National Referral Hospital, Entebbe Regional Referral Hospital and several designated facilities near border points to handle confirmed and suspected Ebola infections.

Atwine said Uganda possesses the technical experience and response systems required to contain the outbreak, citing the country's previous successful responses against Ebola, Marburg and other dangerous infectious diseases over recent years.

"The health ministry urges all members of the public to remain calm, vigilant, and continue observing all recommended preventive measures," Atwine said, while appealing for co-operation from communities and local

leaders. She warned that early detection remains critical in controlling Ebola outbreaks, urging the public to immediately report anyone showing symptoms including fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, severe weakness, bleeding and unexplained chest pain.

STRICT SCHOOL GUIDELINES

The health ministry also directed schools across the country to strengthen Ebola prevention measures as schools reopen for the second term today.

Under the new directives, schools are required to establish hand-washing facilities, screening points and temporary isolation areas for suspected cases while discouraging handshakes, hugging and sharing of personal belongings among learners.

School administrators have been further instructed to immediately report any learner or staff member showing Ebola-like symptoms to district surveillance teams and health authorities for rapid assessment and possible isolation.

Beyond schools, the Government has rolled out broader standard operating procedures targeting churches, markets, funerals and public transport systems where large gatherings and close physical contact increase the risk of transmission.

REGIONAL ALARM GROWS

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention also warned that at least 10 African

'IT IS MANAGEABLE'

Speaking during the launch of the 10th Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo at Munyonyo on Thursday, President Yoweri Museveni assured Ugandans and international visitors that the Ebola situation in the country remains under control, highlighting that government is applying scientific and targeted measures to keep people safe while maintaining economic activities.

Museveni also revealed that he had met a delegation from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention led by director general Dr Jean Kaseya, which proposed establishing a continental Ebola Incident Management Support Team in Kampala.

Museveni welcomed the proposal and pledged Uganda's full support.

"Ebola only becomes deadly when there is a lack of attention. Otherwise, it is very manageable," the President noted during the meeting with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention delegation.

countries are now at risk of possible Ebola spread because of high regional mobility and insecurity in eastern DR Congo.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention director general Dr Jean Kaseya listed Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia among countries facing elevated exposure risks.

Speaking during a regional ministerial meeting on Ebola preparedness in Munyonyo, Kampala, on Saturday, Kaseya praised Uganda's swift response and President Yoweri Museveni's leadership in rapidly activating containment and surveillance measures across the country.

Meanwhile, a delegation from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday briefed Museveni on the current status of the Ebola outbreak and assured him that the situation is being appropriately managed.