

# India closely monitoring Ebola situation: Officials

**New Delhi:** Indian authorities are keeping a close watch on the Ebola outbreak in parts of Africa and health experts have stressed the importance of surveillance to prevent the entry of the virus into the country.

As of Monday, there were over 390 suspected cases and 105 deaths in Congo and two deaths in neighbouring Uganda. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern.

Indian health ministry officials said the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) was closely monitoring developments, while a review meeting was also held to assess In-

dia's preparedness, screening mechanisms and response strategy in case of any suspected case being detected in the country.

Ebola is a severe and often fatal illness caused by the Ebola virus, which spreads through direct contact with the blood, body fluids or tissues of infected people or animals.

The symptoms of Ebola disease can be sudden and include fever, fatigue, malaise, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. These are followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, rash, and symptoms of impaired kidney and liver functions.

While there is currently no Ebola outbreak in India, experts said international travel and global connectivity mean that countries must remain



**A health official uses a thermometer to screen people in front of a hospital in Kampala, Uganda, on Saturday. (AP)**

vigilant against infectious disease threats.

India reported its only known Ebola case in November 2014, when a 26-year-old man who had travelled from Liberia tested positive for the virus in New Delhi. Health authorities had isolated the patient then and carried out extensive con-

tact tracing, preventing any further spread, according to government sources.

The WHO had earlier declared Ebola outbreaks as a public health emergency in 2014 during the massive West Africa outbreak that killed more than 11,000 people, and in 2019 during the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The latest declaration marks the third time Ebola has triggered the WHO's highest level of global health alert.

Dr Sanjay Rai, professor at the department of community medicine, AIIMS Delhi, said India's risk at present remains low.

"India has robust airport screening systems and disease surveillance mechanisms compared to earlier years. However, any outbreak any-

where in the world is a reminder that infectious diseases do not respect borders. Travellers coming from affected countries need close monitoring," Rai told PTI.

He said Ebola does not spread through the air like Covid-19, which limits the chances of large-scale community transmission.

## American positive

An American has tested positive for the Bundibugyo ebolavirus variant in Bunia, Congo, the Serge aid group said on Monday. The CDC said they are working hand in hand with the department of state to move the American for treatment and care to Germany.

## Treatment centres

Congo will open three treat-

ment centres for the Ebola virus in the eastern Ituri province following an outbreak of a variant that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines, as the WHO sent a team of experts and supplies to help combat the spread of the disease.

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