

Ebola almost out of control, says WHO

Lagos, Sunday

FEARS rose Friday that the Ebola virus may have spread as Nigerian authorities said they have quarantined two people who may have the disease and have another 69 under observation.

With fears the disease may get a toehold in Nigeria's most populous city, Lagos, the head of the World Health Organization warned that the virus in West Africa was outstripping efforts to control it.

Dr. Margaret Chan was speaking at a meeting of the leaders of four West African countries in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, to discuss measures to bring the disease under control. The WHO said it planned to release \$100 million to deploy hundreds of medical staff to fight the disease.

More than 1,300 people

have been infected in the West African countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in the worst Ebola outbreak on record. Of those, 729 have died, according to the WHO. In recent weeks the epicenter of the outbreak has shifted from Guinea to Sierra Leone.

"This outbreak is moving faster than our efforts to control it. If the situation continues to deteriorate, the consequences can be catastrophic in terms of lost lives but also severe socioeconomic disruption and a high risk of spread to other countries," Chan said. "This meeting must mark a turning point in the outbreak response."

In Nigeria, authorities insisted they had the situation under control after a Liberian, Patrick Sawyer, 40, became ill with Ebola while flying into the commercial capital,

Lagos, and later died there in a hospital.

The spread of the disease to Lagos has raised fears that cases may emerge farther afield in other parts of Africa, Europe, the United States or elsewhere.

The immediate worst-case scenario would be for the disease to take hold in Lagos — crowded, poverty-stricken in many areas, and at times chaotic, posing the risk it could spread throughout Africa's most populous country.

"It would be foolish for us to think it couldn't spread. I think this is a potential worldwide threat," said Ebola expert G. Richard Olds, dean of the School of Medicine at UC Riverside, noting that in past outbreaks of highly infectious diseases, including SARS, AIDS and monkey pox, the diseases eventually reached the U.S.