

Nairobi in high alert over Ebola

Nairobi, Thursday

THE Ministry of Health, Kenya Airways and the Kenya Airports Authority have assured the public that all the necessary precautions are being undertaken to guard against spread of the Ebola virus after the World Health Organisation classified Kenya as being at high risk of transmission.

Health Cabinet Secretary James Macharia said his ministry "is taking the Ebola threat extremely seriously," as is President Uhuru Kenyatta who has demanded regular updates on Kenya's preparedness.

"Last night we did receive his Excellency the President and the first thing we had to brief him was about the status of Ebola and he told me that soon after this briefing I have to go back to State House to give him more details," Macharia said.

Among the measures the

ministry is taking is increasing the number of isolation facilities prepared for a possible Ebola outbreak from one, at Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH), to at least six at all major points of entry: Mombasa, Busia, Kajiado and Uasin Gishu.

Mbagathi District Hospital, Macharia said, is also being prepared with the Director of Medical Services Nicholas Muraguri adding that the bed capacity of the KNH isolation ward would be expanded from 20 to 100 by Friday.

Muraguri said screening efforts of passengers coming from West Africa at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) would also be expanded to transiting passengers. "They might be flying on to other destinations but they interact with our immigration officers and other passengers so it's important to screen them as well," he said.