

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

AMANA Hospital in Dar es Salaam has been selected to serve as the 'Ebola response center' in the city as the government strengthens the country's defenses against the virus.

The regional referral hospital has some 350 workers of different cadres and is ideally situated in Ilala district, the business hub of the city coined 'Downtown

Dar'.

The development comes in the wake of recent Ebola eruptions in Guinea West Africa following which, Tanzanian epidemiologists received capacity building on Ebola through simulation exercises under the East African Cross Border Surveillance Network at Ngara hospital.

This is located on the border between Rwanda and Burundi where Ebola patients were located.

Over a telephone interview with The Guardian at the start

of the week, Epidemiologist Elibariki Mwakapeje from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) reassured the public that the government is taking all necessary steps to ensure their safety.

As is the case with Dar es Salaam, the government has set up response centers across the country, he explained noting that, the government has dispatched among other things material and equipment to all Regional Medical Officers (RMOs) to ensure efficient detection and response.

"No patient has been diagnosed with the disease in Tanzania," he confirmed.

"We have already sent a manifesto to all RMOs equipping them with standard case definition, detailed description of symptoms and the first steps to be take," he said.

"All RMOs are also instructed to set aside emergency isolation wards for suspected cases and this is to be carried out in both regional and referral hospitals across the country," he noted.

Through zonal Medical

Stores Department (MSD) offices, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has already made available Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) to all physicians in selected response hospitals to protect themselves from Ebola when attending patients.

Detailing on the doctors' and scientists' preparedness the Epidemiologist said:

"We are now using a new disease identifying system known as the Integrated Diseases Surveillance Response (IDSR)...with this system, we are able to detect

and report Ebola cases within 24 hours."

"We have already started to use the system and every Friday we detailed on the scan reports," he went on to say.

"Up to this week, there have been no suspected cases of the disease," he reassured the public

Further, Mwakapeje said the government, working with the epidemiologists, is now conducting screening sessions at all ports of entry to the country including land, sea and airports.

"In case we identify a

positive case, we are well prepared to respond swiftly and efficiently," he said.

Ebola, named after the Ebola River in Zaire is the human disease caused by Ebola viruses contracted when one comes in contact with infected body fluid.

The disease is first acquired by a population when a person comes into contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected animal such as a monkey or fruit bat. Fruit bats are believed to carry and spread the disease without being affected by it.

Symptoms start a day or two days or even up to three weeks after contracting the virus with a fever, throat and muscle pains, and headaches.

There is then nausea, vomiting and diarrhea along with decreased functioning of the liver and kidneys. At this point some people begin to have problems with bleeding, putting it in the class of hemorrhagic fevers

Because there is no cure, patients are only treated for blood and water loss, however most people suffering from it die.