

DR Congo Ebola death toll climbs to 32

September 7 2014

The Democratic Republic of Congo upped its death toll from Ebola on Saturday to 32 but insisted the outbreak, separate from an epidemic raging in west Africa, could be contained in its remote forest hotspot.

"We have registered 32 deaths," one up from a toll issued on Tuesday, Health Minister Felix Kabange Numbi told a press conference.

Kabange tallied 59 likely or confirmed cases of the tropical fever, saying the "big challenge" was to survey suspicious cases in order to staunch the contagion.

Three hundred and thirty-six people have had contact with Ebola sufferers or the bodies of victims, up from 285 on Tuesday, he said.

The DRC has given itself 45 days to break the transmission train of the virus, which can spread by contact with bodily fluids and has killed more than 2,000 people in four West African nations this year.

But Kabange said the [outbreak](#) in DRC—where Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the river of the same name in what was then Zaire—"remains contained".

He recently returned from a trip to the affected region, near the city of Boende some 800 kilometres (500 miles) northwest of Kinshasa in Equateur province.

Authorities have implemented "protected burials" for any funeral,

irrespective of whether the victim died from Ebola, in the 23 villages affected by the outbreak, he said.

While the outbreak is located far from urban centres in the heart of dense equatorial forest, reducing the risk of contagion, its remoteness has made aid delivery a particular challenge.

Decades of neglect have devastated road and rail infrastructure, also hampering efforts to quarantine patients.

Kabange said aid groups had established "an air drop in order to deliver medical supplies".

Last week, the UN announced it had released \$1.5 million (1.3 million euros) to help the government in Kinshasa combat the outbreak, with the prospect of doubling that sum.

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