

DR Congo virus watchdog warns of 'worst' in capital

April 15 2020

DR Congo's health authorities have appealed for maximum effort to avoid "the worst" impact of an expected peak in coronavirus cases in the capital Kinshasa next month.

The pandemic in the capital city and province "is entering an exponential phase," the country's COVID-19 watchdog said in a report seen by AFP on Wednesday.

"The peak of this growth will occur between the first and second week of May," it said.

"During this period, we must expect a major influx of patients to health facilities, which will probably be overwhelmed. If current preparatory efforts are not completed in time, we must fear the worst."

The largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo suffers from chronically weak healthcare infrastructure, entrenched poverty and, in Kinshasa, crowded slums.

The DRC has so far recorded 21 dead out of 254 cases since March 10, almost all in Kinshasa.

The report was of a meeting of the multi-sector committee for response to COVID-19.

It was signed by the committee's technical secretary, Jean-Jacques

Muyembe, a world-renowned virologist who is also the co-discoverer of the Ebola virus.

The document warned bluntly that in Kinshasa "social distancing measures have completely lapsed" and there were fears of an "intense" spread of [coronavirus](#) disease "in the coming weeks".

It recommended obligatory wearing of masks in public areas, especially in buses and markets, and urged that a lockdown imposed on the central business district of Gombe since April 6 be extended to neighbouring areas.

In the neighbouring Republic of Congo, also called Congo-Brazzaville, 43 new cases of coronavirus have been detected, bringing the total since March 14 to 117 cases, five of which have been fatal, Health Minister Jacqueline Lydia Mikolo said on Wednesday.

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Citation: DR Congo virus watchdog warns of 'worst' in capital (2020, April 15) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-dr-congo-virus-watchdog-worst.html>

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