Kenya says it has detected S. Africa COVID-19 strain

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Kenya's health ministry says two men have tested positive for a coronavirus strain first detected in South Africa, the first such cases detected in the East African country.

Both cases, which were asymptomatic, were detected in Kenya's coastal county of Kilifi, and involved foreigners who had since returned home,

the ministry's director-general said Wednesday.

"We all know that this variant is 50 percent more transmissible, therefore posing a significant risk, in that more people will be infected and therefore could be able to stretch the healthcare system more," said Dr. Patrick Amoth.

No information was provided about the nationalities of the men who tested positive for the variant.

According to official figures released Thursday, Kenya has recorded 99,630 cases of coronavirus, of which 1,739 have been fatal, since the outset of the pandemic.

The outbreak surged in October, with the average percentage of positive cases returned in a week soaring to above 16 percent of all tests. That number dropped below three percent last week.

Kenya took quick measures to contain the virus when it was first detected in March, imposing a strict curfew, closing bars and restaurants and shutting schools.

The country has been under some form of nighttime curfew ever since, but other measures have eased somewhat and schools reopened to all students this month after some classes partially resumed in October.

In a briefing paper released Thursday, the Kenya Medical Research Institute forecast that COVID-19 cases and deaths would steadily rise until a peak in mid-March as a likely result of reopening schools.

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