

# DRC confirms first Ebola cases

**FREETOWN:** The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) confirmed two cases of Ebola, but said they were unrelated to the epidemic in four countries of West Africa.

Yesterday, Britain's first Ebola patient, a male nurse who contracted the disease in Sierra Leone, was admitted to a London hospital.

The virus has infected more than 2 600 and killed 1 427, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) figures released on Friday.

Congolese Health Minister Felix Kabange Numbi said two of eight samples taken from victims of a mystery fever had tested positive for Ebola.

He said the confirmation marked the seventh outbreak of Ebola in the DRC, where the virus was first identified in 1976 near the Ebola River.

But he said the two new cases had "no link to 'the epidemic' raging in West Africa".

Authorities imposed a quarantine around the affected area

in Equateur province near Jera, more than 1 200km north-east of the capital Kinshasa.

Sierra Leone, where 392 Ebola deaths have been recorded, is one of four West African states struggling to control the spread of Ebola.

The epidemic is taking its toll on the economies of some of the world's poorest countries. Several international airlines have halted flights to the region. Steel giant ArcelorMittal said contractors at its iron ore works in Liberia had suspended operations and were pulling out staff.

In quarantined areas in Sierra Leone and Liberia, cash crops like cocoa and coffee are being left to rot as farmers fear to stray from home.

The Ivory Coast has closed its borders with Guinea and Liberia, just days after Senegal did the same with Guinea.

South Africa has banned entry for non-citizens arriving from Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. – Sapa-AFP