

Asia's Ebola fears cause tour cancellations

The Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, says South Africa's tourism sector is not under threat from the Ebola Virus Disease even though a number of Asian visitors have cancelled planned trips to this country.



Communications Minister Faith Muthambi says that incorrect information from some Asian governments had prompted the cancellation of planned trips because visitors feared they might risk contracting Ebola Virus Disease. These reports are completely wrong. Image: GCIS

In a statement Muthambi reiterated that South Africa remains the destination of choice for tourists, despite a report in the media which stated that tourism had become the first victim of Ebola even though the country has no reported cases of the disease.

A media report claimed that 1,500 tourists from Thailand, who were meant to visit the country, have cancelled their trips.

"It is unfortunate that the newspaper would choose to report that a handful of tourists cancelled their trips due to unfounded fears, which according to the report are based on erroneous facts about the virus.

"This is despite the government's assurance that it has efficient systems and the necessary medical facilities in place at the country's ports of entry. The risk of Ebola being introduced into South Africa remains low and our tourism industry remains vibrant and lucrative," said Muthambi.

Over 1,400 people have now died from Ebola in West Africa, with Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone declaring a national state of emergency.

The surveillance for viral haemorrhagic fevers has been strengthened at ports of entry. The National Health Laboratory Service and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases have also intensified laboratory surveillance and the port health services, including public and private health care practitioners, who are on alert for any ill persons that have travelled to high risk areas.

There are 11 designated health facilities in the country to manage any reported Ebola cases. South Africa has also dispatched a specialist team to assist with the virus outbreak in Sierra Leone.

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