

WHO officially declares Sierra Leone Ebola-free

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London: Sierra Leone has been declared Ebola-free by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Saturday, prompting nationwide celebrations, the media reported on Saturday.

The capital Freetown was transformed into a giant carnival as crowds took to the streets, The Guardian reported.

In a low-key ceremony in the capital earlier in the day, the WHO country director, Anders Nordstr m, confirmed 42 days had passed without any new cases, thereby satisfying criteria that transmission of the virus has ended.

A vigil was held for the 3,955 who died, including 221 health workers. Eleven doctors died in the country, which had just 120 for 6 million people.

Ebola spread to Sierra Leone in May 2014, when a young pregnant woman and an older housewife were diagnosed as the country's first cases.

Both attended the funeral of a widely respected faith healer who had been attending to sick patients in a village a few hours' walk from Gueckedou in Guinea, where the outbreak began.

Overall, the death toll for the outbreak in west Africa stands at 11,313.

- IANS