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PRESS RELEASE

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BIOSAFETY LEVEL-3 LABORATORY GOES INTO OPERATION WITH SUPPORTS FROM JICA

Ho Chi Minh city, January 17th, 2022 - The Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City (PI HCMC) hold an inauguration of its new Biosafety Level-3 Laboratory (BSL-3) on January 17th, 2022. For this new laboratory, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has supported the main materials and equipment such as the air conditioning system, the wastewater treatment system, and the two-door autoclave, with a total value of 200 million yen (nearly 40 billion VND).

Joining the ceremony online were Dr. Nguyen Minh Hang - Deputy Director of the General Department of Preventive Medicine, Ministry of Health, Prof. Dr. Dang Duc Anh - Director of the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE), and JICA Headquarters. Mr. Watanabe Nobuhiro – Consul General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City, Mr. Shimizu Akira - Chief Representative of JICA Vietnam Office and Project experts attended the ceremony at site.

Mr. Hoang Quoc Cuong - Vice Director of PI HCMC expressed his deep thanks to the stakeholders: “The biosafety laboratory was built from June 2021. During the construction process, despite facing many difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as well as social isolation, with the enthusiastic help of the Ministry of Health, NIHE, JICA and the construction party, the project was completed in half a year.”

In response, Mr. Shimizu Akira - Chief Representative of JICA Vietnam Office said: "Previously, PI HCMC's mobile BSL-3 laboratory was not big enough so the handling of samples was limited. We hope that this support of JICA will help Vietnam further strengthen the ability to deal with infectious diseases."

At the end of the ceremony, the delegation visited the biosafety laboratory.

To present, Vietnam has faced with the threat of many infectious diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) in 2004. In pursuance of helping Vietnam safely handle and deal with high-risk pathogens, Japan's Official Development Cooperation (ODA) has supported the construction of BSL-3 laboratory for the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) in 2006, the mobile BSL-3 laboratory at PI HCMC and enhanced the capacity of the laboratory system.

Currently, three Japanese experts are working on a project to increase the capacity of the laboratory systems at NIHE and PI HCMC- the two key testing institutes in Vietnam - under the Project for “Capacity Strengthening for Medical Laboratory Network on Biosafety and Testing of Highly Hazardous Infectious Pathogens in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (2017-2023)”.

From November 2021, the Japan National Institute of Infectious Diseases, NIHE and Mr. Miki Hideki – the Japanese expert working at PI HCMC have conducted training on laboratory operation for PI HCMC staffs.

JICA will continue to work under the direction of the Japanese Government to support Vietnam's efforts to combat new strains of Covid-19.

**Biosafety Level (BSL):* Rating of a facility on handling of pathogens such as bacteria and viruses, and increased risk of pathogens from 1 to 4.

*** Information on project:* <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1600512/index.html>

**For further information, please contact:*

JICA Viet Nam Office

11th Floor, Corner Stone Building, 16 Phan Chu Trinh Street, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel: (84-24) 3831 5005 (ext. 125) ; Ms. Le Quynh Anh (PR Officer)