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 July 27, 2009

Meet to combat diseases

By Diana Othman

MORE than 20 scientists and experts and 200 researchers from the European Union (EU) and South-East Asia are in in Singapore to discuss new strategies to combat diseases such as dengue, malaria and chikungunya.

Organised by the Singapore Immunology Network (SIgN) under the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star), the EU-South-East Asia Expert Meeting on Vector-Borne Diseases is a two-day meeting being held in Biopolis. It opened on Monday.

Professor Sir Roy Anderson, a distinguished epidemiologist and Rector of Imperial College London, delivered the first keynote lecture.

Issues such as virology, parasitology, transmission, diagnostics, and treatment and prevention strategies of vector-borne diseases are expected to be discussed.

Vector-borne diseases are infectious diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, sand-flies and rodents. They include dengue, malaria, chikungunya and encephalitis, which are a rising concern in developing and developed nations.

Vector-borne diseases put up to 80 per cent of the world's population at risk of infection, with some 500 million reported cases a year.

Due to factors like climate and environmental changes, globalisation and the increasing travel and trade that it brings, the spread of vector-borne diseases are no longer confined to specific regions of the world as before.

In Southeast Asia, which is endemic to vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue, heightened surveillance measures and vector control measures have been implemented.

In Singapore, several outbreaks of dengue, malaria, and chikungunya have occurred in the past 10 years. Without available commercial vaccines for these diseases, Singapore is still expending significant resources in the fight against them.

Said Mr Lim Chuan Poh, chairman of A*Star: 'This is a timely meeting. The Influenza Type A H1N1 pandemic is with us and poised for a second wave... I trust that these discussions will lead to new research collaborations and spawn innovations that will advance our knowledge of the diseases and enhance human healthcare delivery.'

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Scientists stop dengue spread

By Grace Chua



Researchers also found that the chikungunya virus can replicate in mosquitoes and be ready to infect humans within just three days, compared to seven to 14 days for the dengue virus. -- PHOTO: AP

A DENGUE outbreak here may have been stopped in its tracks by a team of scientists at the Environmental Health Institute.

In March the scientists, studying common strains of the virus here, discovered the resurfacing of a third, less common type in Little India and Geylang, they alerted the National Environment Agency (NEA), which stepped up its infection control measures and manpower to rid these areas of mosquito breeding.

On Tuesday, the institute's key findings on dengue and chikungunya were presented by its head, Dr Ng Lee Ching at the EU-Southeast Asia meeting on vector-borne diseases, organised by the Singapore Immunology Network under the Agency for Science, Technology and Research.

For instance, there are four strains or serotypes of dengue. A switch in predominance from one strain to another is associated with outbreaks, as people have lower immunity to a new strain.

Researchers also found that the chikungunya virus can replicate in mosquitoes and be ready to infect humans within just three days, compared to seven to 14 days for the dengue virus.

That's why chikungunya can spread so fast - just as it did last year, when the first local infections struck here. Since the start of last year, there have been 803 local cases and 214 cases imported from elsewhere in Asia.

Researchers are now also able to conduct genetic 'paternity tests' to discover which countries the virus came from, said Dr Ng.

The institute is still studying the current malaria outbreak, she added.

The disease, which resurfaced here with perhaps the largest local cluster in almost three decades, is transmitted by the Anopheles mosquito.

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Scientists discuss ways to combat infectious diseases in Singapore

SINGAPORE, July 27 (Xinhua) -- More than 200 scientists and researchers from the European Union (EU) and Southeast Asia met here on Monday to discuss new strategies to combat infectious diseases.

Participants of the two-day meeting will discuss topics such as virology, parasitology, transmission, diagnostics, and treatment and prevention strategies of vector-borne diseases in the region, global warming as well as approaches to containing diseases, according to statement issued by Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

Vector-borne diseases are infectious diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, sand-flies and rodents. Amongst others, they include dengue, malaria, chikungunya and encephalitis, which are a rising concern in developing and developed nations.

Vector-borne diseases put up to 80 percent of the world's population at risk of infection, with approximately 500 million reported cases a year, according to the statement.

Speakers including Roy Anderson, epidemiologist and rector of Imperial College London, spoke on ways to manage and tackle the threats posed by fast-spreading and emerging infectious agents in an increasingly globalized world.

Chairman of A*STAR Lim Chuan Poh regarded the meeting as "timely."

"The Influenza Type A H1N1 pandemic is with us and poised for a second wave. The world scientific community has generally responded well to the threat by sharing information, materials and working together", he said. "I trust that these discussions will lead to new research collaborations and spawn innovations that will advance our knowledge of the diseases and enhance human healthcare delivery."

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July 27, 2009 16:47 PM

EU, Asian Medical Experts Discuss Vector-Borne Diseases

SINGAPORE, July 27 (Bernama) -- About 200 medical researchers and scientists from Europe and Southeast Asia gathered here today to discuss vector-borne diseases which are fast spreading globally.

About 20 outstanding scientists and experts from leading research centres, universities and hospitals in the European Union (EU) and Southeast Asia would talk on topics such as virology, parasitology, transmission, diagnostics and treatment and prevention strategies of vector-borne diseases.

Vector-borne diseases such as dengue, malaria, chikungunya and encephalitis, which are a rising concern in developing and developed nations, are infectious diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, sand-flies and rodents.

Vector-borne diseases put up to 80 per cent of the world's population at risk of infection, with approximately 500 million reported cases annually.

Unlike before, the spread of vector-borne diseases is no longer confined to specific regions of the world, due to factors like climate and environmental changes, globalisation and the increasing international travel and trade.

The two-day 'EU-Southeast Asia Expert Meeting on Vector-Borne Diseases' at Biopolis here is organised by the Singapore Immunology Network under the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

In his keynote address, Professor Sir Roy Anderson, an epidemiologist and Rector of Imperial College London, lectured on ways to manage and tackle threats posed by fast-spreading and emerging infectious agents in an increasingly populous world.

Other topics to be discussed at the symposium include threats and opportunities from vector-borne diseases for Southeast Asia, global warming and re-emergence of malaria, dengue and chikungunya.

A*STAR chairman Lim Chuan Poh said the meeting was timely as the Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic was still spreading in the world community and poised for a second wave.

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