

High level bio-safety laboratory boosts epidemic reaction capacity

By Correspondent
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WITH deadly diseases erupting in neighbouring countries, the Bio-safety Level 3 (BSL3) laboratory was opened on Thursday in Bagamoyo to enable scientists monitor infectious diseases in the sub-region.

The laboratory, among other functions, would help monitor the vices, including

finding ways to prevent them from spreading further in the country and from neighbouring country in Tanzanian soil.

Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) executive director Dr Salim Abdulla said at the opening ceremony that the laboratory situated at the Bagamoyo district hospital would observe real-time domestic information network to upgrade the quality of decision making in disease

control.

Laboratory facilities would also be available for scientific consultation and active participation of its staff in the national and regional infectious disease emergency preparedness plan, he said.

This enhances the possibility of promptly responding to epidemic outbreaks with enormous benefits for the health of the population, the director noted.

In the framework of global preparedness and response to infectious diseases outbreaks, the laboratory will be part of the African Network of high bio-safety facilities for outbreak response, he stated.

The recent outbreak of a new pathogen, a corona virus similar to SARS, discovered in Saudi Arabia led to a red alert to countries around the world, due to increasing movement of people across continents, he said.

No proper high level bio-safety facilities dedicated to the epidemic response can be found in the country, he said.

To diagnose highly infectious diseases like viral hemorrhagic fevers, plague and anthrax or unknown emerging diseases, high level bio-safety is needed, he affirmed, emphasizing that the new facility assures the safe manipulation of biological samples that are potentially lethal and transmissible by

inhalation, to avoid the spread of the pathogens.

The Bio-Safety Level 3 (BSL3) laboratory is a project funded by the Italian Development Cooperation Agency and the Italian National Institute for Infectious Diseases (INMI), in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Ifakara Health Institute (IHI).

Pierluigi Velardi, the Italian ambassador, said the

laboratory is going to give Tanzania an opportunity to increase the quality and rapidity of response in case of epidemics.

Highly infectious diseases will be put at bay owing to availability of an in-country diagnostic facility providing the standard level of safety for operators and for the population, he stated.

The laboratory will be an essential point of reference in setting up networks between

health organizations, universities as well as domestic and international laboratories tasked with the specific field of infectious diseases, the envoy noted.

The new facilities offer an opportunity to strengthen research activities on highly infectious diseases and emerging diseases, he said at an official inauguration by the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Seif Rashid.