

Friday, May 5, 2017

By Lawrence Vomafa-Akpalu

**A**sod-cutting ceremony was on Wednesday performed for the construction of an advanced research centre for infectious diseases at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR) at the University of Ghana in Accra.

The \$21-million project expected to be completed in 17 months involves the construction of biosafety level three laboratories, a virology lab, bacteriology and immunology laboratories as well as training and conference centres.

The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sponsored project sought to position the institute to respond to expanding research and training needs of the country as well as the West Africa sub-region to effectively respond to disease outbreaks, including highly pathogenic agents such as the ebola virus.

The Chief Representative of the JICA, Hirofumi Hoshi commended the institute on its remarkable contribution to research in public health service in the country that had elevated it to the leading role in regional disease surveillance network in West Africa.

He said the 90 years of strong collaboration between Ghana and

Japan was yielding positive results and urged for more commitment to enable the institute acquire the global recognition as a centre of excellence in Africa.

Mr Hoshi said that JICA would soon start a regional training for laboratory technologists in Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

He indicated that the Tokyo International Conference on African Development held in Kenya last year reiterated the importance to include the preparedness for public health emergencies into achieving universal health coverage, adding that Ghana had great potential in achieving that feat through the contribution from the institute.

He charged the institute to further strengthen the role of bridging research and health service in order to better respond to emergencies.

The Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education, Professor Kwesi Yankah said the government had noted with keen interest the continued support of scientific research at the University of Ghana by the Japanese government through the NMIMR that had changed the country's disease profile.

He said the government's prioritised agenda to fight infections called for the expansion of current facilities to ensure that

# Construction of \$21m advanced research centre commences

intended targets were met, adding that the need for expansion in laboratory space was a vote of confidence in Noguchi that fits within government's overriding interest in science and technology and its resolve to accelerate the pace of scientific research in the country.

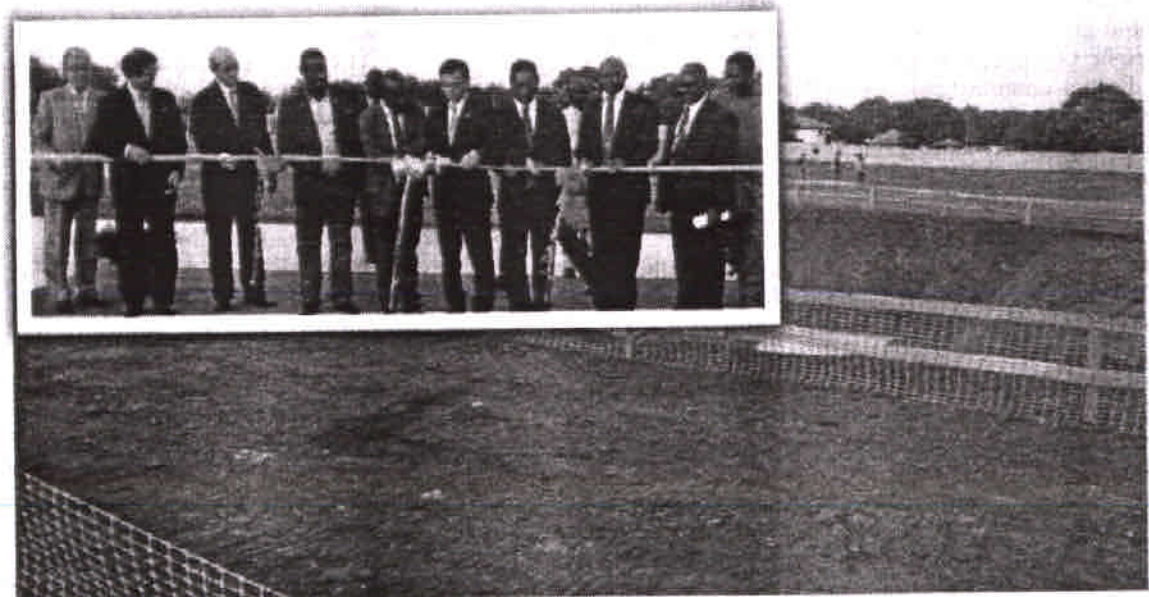
The Provost of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities,

Prof. Samuel Agyei-Mensah said the new facility would provide efficient, safe and effective teaching and learning materials to respond to disease outbreaks.

The Minister of Health, Mr. Kwaku Agyemang-Manu said the persistent infectious diseases outbreak on the continent was likely to re-occur, hence the need for more resilient and robust re-

search activities to explore more into infection prevention.

He said the ministry was ready to collaborate with partners to provide first class facilities in the country's quest to confront infectious diseases and commended the Japanese government for its immense contribution to the health sector that has improved service delivery.



*Inset: Prof. Kwesi Yankah (fourth from right) and Mr Agyemang-Manu (fifth from left) being assisted by Mr Shinsuke Suematsu (fifth from right) and Mr Kaoru Yoshimura (second from left) and others to cut the tape for the commencement of the project. Photo: Victor A. Buxton*