

FIRST ASEAN DENGUE DAY WITH INAUGURATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE AS A WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE

The 15th of June has been officially designated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the ASEAN Dengue Day – an annual campaign day to advocate dengue prevention and control.

Marking the significance of this day, Singapore National Environment Agency (NEA) officially inaugurated the Environmental Health Institute (EHI) as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for the Reference and Research of Arbovirus and their Associated Vectors, in a ceremony held at the Biopolis on 15 June 2011.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and Dr Shin Young-soo, the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific.



Group photograph taken to commemorate the inauguration ceremony

In the welcome remarks, Mr Andrew Tan, CEO of NEA, said that as a WHO Collaborating Centre, EHI will be able to leverage the WHO's expertise and its international network of experts and collaborating centres. Such regional cooperation will benefit the national surveillance and control programme of the region as a whole, including Singapore.



Mr Andrew Tan giving the welcome remarks at the inauguration ceremony

In the opening address, Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan noted that the designation by the WHO demonstrates its appreciation of EHI as a valued partner and takes the partnership to a higher level. He urged EHI to forge closer relationships with other institutions and work together so that the region would be better prepared to tackle arboviral disease.



Dr Vivian Balakrishnan giving the opening speech at the inauguration ceremony

Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific reiterated that dengue cannot be fought merely at the level of the health response, as it is also an environmental problem, and this requires everyone from national governments down to the householder needs to work to eliminate the presence of mosquitoes. Following the inauguration ceremony, both Dr Balakrishnan and Dr Shin were given a guided tour of the EHI.



Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and Dr Shin Young-soo viewing the posters showcasing EHI's research outcomes



A researcher at EHI demonstrating how to identify the mosquito larvae caught in the field

After the inauguration ceremony, a dengue symposium, titled “Tackling the Dengue Challenge” was held for the local and international scientific community as well as public health practitioners. Speakers were invited to present their latest findings on vector control, virology, drug development, diagnosis and clinical management. The symposium also leveraged real-time conference Q&A tool to facilitate interactive discussion on current issues surrounding dengue control and research.



Invited experts chairing the panel discussion on issues surrounding vector control at the symposium



Dr David Lee from EHI giving his talk on the molecular epidemiology of dengue at the symposium