

Start production of a rapid test kit for *Helicobacter pylori* infection in Bhutan (International Collaborative Research Program : Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS) *1)

- Development of Test kit and Certification: As a rapid diagnostic method for *H. pylori* infection, Japan and Bhutan jointly developed a stool antigen immunochromatography (ICT) kit. The Prime Minister of Bhutan indicated a policy to simplify domestic certification (use permission) by obtaining manufacturing and marketing approval obtained in Japan. Currently, an application for approval in Japan is being prepared by SATREPS FY2025 additional budget.
- Production of Test kit: Since FY2022, the Royal Centre for Disease Control (RCDC), Ministry of Health of Bhutan, has installed the equipment required for ICT kit production and has implemented human resource development. In September 2025, the establishment of production system in Bhutan was completed. This was an epoch-making event that greatly changed the medical environment in Bhutan, where most patients were unable to be diagnosed due to expensive imported test kits, and was introduced in a Bhutanese newspaper article.

< Reference >

- Project title: Institutional capacity building for eliminating *H. pylori* related death
- Research period: FY2021 – FY2026
- Principal Investigator :
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 - (Bhutan) Pem Namgyel (President, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan)

*1 SATREPS is a Japanese government program to promote international joint research instructed as a collaboration between AMED and JICA with Official Development Assistance (ODA). Based on the needs of developing countries, this program aims at solving global issues with an objective of future utilization of research outcomes to both local and global society.

HOME

Bhutan develops its own testkit for *H. Pylori* infection

Photo: Donyo Dargy
The Royal Centre for Disease Control has started producing rapid test kits to detect *Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori) infection among the population in



Photo: Donyo Dargy
Bhutan will have low-cost stool antigen test kits designed to detect *H. pylori*.
H. pylori infection is one of the leading causes of gastric cancer in the country and a major factor in the disease, which remains one of the deadliest, according to health officials.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
With budgetary support of Nu 298.32 million from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a test kit has been installed at the Royal Centre for Disease Control (RCDC).

Photo: Donyo Dargy
The initiative falls under a project for institutional capacity building to eliminate *H. pylori* infection.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
Bhutan will be among the few countries in the region to produce its own medical diagnostic kits, boosting self-reliance and strengthening the country's healthcare system.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
Bhutan officials say the locally developed kits will not only improve early detection but also reduce dependence on imports.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
"This is a milestone in our fight against gastric cancer," said an RCDC official. "We will be able to produce reliable kits made in Bhutan, we can improve early detection and save lives."

Photo: Donyo Dargy
Article introducing project achievement
(Kuensel, Bhutan's largest newspaper)

Photo: Donyo Dargy
Chhimi Dorji, Special Head

Photo: Donyo Dargy
of RCDC, said producing antigen test kits locally will reduce dependence on imported kits.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
Bhutan can also export these test kits to other countries.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
"With the already installed machinery, we will be able to produce other kits, such as

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"The quality of the kits de-

Photo: Donyo Dargy
pends on their sensitivity and specificity."

Photo: Donyo Dargy
"The goal was not just making cheap kits, but about building Bhutan's own diagnostic devices using health technologies adapted to the country's unique needs."

Photo: Donyo Dargy
"Many people are reluctant to undergo a test for *H. pylori* detection, but these test kits would allow anyone to easily check their status if made available in pharmacies," she added.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
However, the main challenge is to find a manager of the project. The country has only two trained personnel who develop the kits, and they are on an extramural leave.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
An official from JICA said the project is nearly complete and the government would continue it.

Photo: Donyo Dargy
"Through this project, we have provided technical support, supplied machines, set up the lab, and trained personnel," he said. "In essence, we have depended on the government's continued support and involvement."