Japan to develop fastest supercomputer

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Japan will develop a next-generation supercomputer, some 73 times faster than today's record-holder.

According to the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry, the planned supercomputer will operate at a maximum speed of 10 petaflops, or 10 quadrillion floating point operations per second, the Japan Times reported Tuesday.

That would far exceed the current record of 136.8 teraflops held by the United States supercomputer Blue Gene/L, which was jointly developed by IBM and the U.S. government.

The total amount for the project is likely to reach $716 million to $895 million by the time the project is completed in 2010, if all goes as planned.

Such high-speed computers are necessary for simulating experiments that are difficult to conduct or take too much time in real life. Researchers hope to use the computer to develop new drugs, to simulate the formation of galaxies and to predict the paths of typhoons and intense rainfall.

The Japanese supercomputer held the title of world's fastest until last September but as of June it had fallen to fourth place.

The United States is also planning to create a supercomputer of petaflop ability by 2010. A petaflop is equal to 1,000 teraflops.