The following non-resident Bangladeshis enriched the deliberations with their presentations: Professor Ahmed Azad (Australia), Dr. Abed Chaudhury (Australia), Dr. Abul Ekramoddoullah (Canada), Dr. Lamia Sharmeen (Nanoderm Therapeutics, Ann Arbor, MI, USA), Dr. Jalaluddin Bhuiyan (Saudi Arabia), Dr. Nur-é-Kamal and Professor Ahmad Islam (USA). Equally brilliant were the talks by local scientists. They were: Prof. Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University; Prof. Zeba I. Seraj, Prof. Haseena Khan; Dr. Shah M. Faruque and Dr. Firdausi Qadri of ICDDR, B.

Unique Feature of the Conference: This conference was that this was the first time that the academia, Bangladesh Science Academy, pharmaceutical and seed industry, the government and an international research organization, namely, ICDDR,B, joined hands to organize the conference and supported it morally and financially. About 300 participants registered for the occasion and a few more were to come but could not due to lack of space. Usually, after the inauguration, the guests and the majority of participants leave without listening to the speakers at the subsequent sessions. In that regard, this was unprecedented because all sessions on a variety of biotech disciplines were attended in record numbers, so much so that it was difficult to accommodate latecomers. Due to the large number of papers, there were three concurrent sessions on the third day.

Quality of papers presented at the conference and that of posters: The quality of papers were so good that one foreign national and one expatriate, both of whom are globetrotters attending different international functions, remarked that these presentations were as good as those delivered in science conferences in developed countries. One of the most interesting talks was by the managing director, Incepta Pharmaceuticals, Mr. A. Muktadir. He expressed his will to do the best he could to promote biotech in Bangladesh, and one of the programs he would start is to award fellowships to graduate students for pursuing Ph.D. degree. The poster session was equally interesting and there were 72 posters including one by me on some recently reported genes from DNA library on "Tossa" jute. Two posters presented by Dhaka University, BRRI, ICDDR, B and BAU students earned first, second and third prize.

The Position paper: The position paper prepared by a team of four (Professor Ahmed Azad, Dr. S. M. Faruque, Professor Naiyyum Chaudhury and Professor Ahmad Islam) was presented to the biotech community present in the meeting. The document was recast in the light of their suggestions. Headed by Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury and comprising Professor Ahmed Azad, Prof. Naiyyum Chowdhury and Prof. Zeba Seraj, the team recently called on Mr. Tapan Chowdhury, the Science and Technology adviser, to submit a modified version of the position paper, reflecting the opinion and recommendations of the biotech community at the conference, including those of non-resident Bangladeshis who communicated their view through electronic media. The Adviser listened to the delegates with a good deal of interest and assured that his Ministry would do its best for implementation of the recommendations. Some of the major recommendations in the position paper are as follows:

·The establishment of the National Commission for Biotechnology (NCBT) with a secretariat headed by a full time Secretary with a science background.

·Minimum three years tenure of the NCBT Secretary in order to ensure an uninterrupted growth of biotech activity.

·Full autonomy of NCBT and freedom to spend from the budgetary allocation.

·NCBT will be run by its own governing body and will be answerable only to the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

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