The case for bio-tech in Bangladesh

We will never advance as a nation unless we advance in the sciences, argues Ahmed A. Azad, and bio-tech should lead the way



SCIENCE and technology have a very low profile in Bangladesh, and their critical importance in sustainable development hardly rates more than a cursory mention in the economic policy documents prepared by various think-tanks in academia, government and civil society. This is in spite of irrefutable evidence that there is a very strong correlation between levels of scientific proficiency and economic development.

An overwhelming majority of scientifically lagging and least developed countries of the world are situated in Africa and parts of Asia, a region that roughly corresponds to the membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Unlike many other countries in the OIC region, Bangladesh has a small but highly trained scientific manpower and yet remains near the bottom rung of the scientifically lagging countries. Bangladesh also has the unenviable distinction and ignominy of being only one of three Islamic countries in the whole of Asia and North Africa that are classified as being least developed. This has less to do with scientific and human potential than with lack of leadership and neglect of science and technology as a capacity building measure.

What distinguishes the scientifically lagging countries from the developed countries of the West and the rapidly advancing countries of the developing world such as India, China and Brazil is their lack of scientific capacity and intellectual capital. In those rapidly advancing countries, and other scientifically proficient countries of the developing world such as Cuba, South Korea and Singapore, it has become quite clear that national will and pride, visionary leadership, and the nurturing of scientific talent can turn the tide.