the release of the government's Biotechnology Policy, the document does not specify how the policies should be implemented or funded. The Biotechnology Policy is also quiet about the role of the government's single biggest biotechnology asset, the National Institute of Biotechnology (NIB) in the implementation of the government's plans. A beautiful building has been constructed at the cost of Taka 28 crore, but it essentially remains an empty shell.

However, the NIB has the potential to become a world-class center of excellence in biotechnology with proper planning and sufficient and meaningful funding, which the government is unlikely to be able to provide on its own.

Attempts during the tenure of the previous government to obtain funding through public-private partnership in Bangladesh, and very substantial international funding from the Millennium Science Initiative, failed because of the objection of one minister and the Project Director to the concept of public-private partnership, when the government's own Biotechnology Policy supports this.

In response to the government's Biotechnology Policy, and taking into consideration the inherent difficulties and deficiencies and also the enormous potential that exists, the conference attendees and the "Global Network of Bangladeshi Biotechnologists" (www.gnobb.org) have prepared a set of recommendations and a Position Paper to help the government in implementing its Biotechnology Policy. The recommendations deal mainly with the creation of an independent body for coordination and support of biotechnology activities in the country, and the restructuring of the existing NIB.

The government has been requested to establish a national commission for biotechnology (NCBT) with its own secretariat and independent core funding. The proposed NCBT will oversee the implementation of the government's Biotechnology Policy, and promote biotechnology activities through liaison with relevant government departments, academic and research institutions, the



private sector, funding agencies and development partners. It will fund biotechnology research and training through a competitive research grants scheme, and pre-doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships.

The government has also been requested to restructure the current National Institute of Biotechnology as an autonomous research flagship of the NCBT, with the mandate to be the national resource and training centre for facilitating and supporting priority areas of research in modern biotechnology. It will comprise of an Intramural Centre in Savar and Extramural Research Units spread across Bangladesh.

The Intramural Centre at the existing NIB site will consist of three sections: (i) Research (national priority programs in all areas of modern biotechnology) (ii) Major equipment and core facilities (national resource centre accessible to all biotechnology related R&D groups in Bangladesh) (iii) Technology Transfer and Commercial Applications (to be set up in partnership with industry for the commercialization of biotechnology research).

Funding for major equipment and core facilities, and for training and visiting fellowships, could be obtained from the Millennium Science Funds if the NIB could qualify as a Millennium Institute. Additional funding could be sought from the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Technology (ICGET), The Academy of the Developing World (ADW), Islamic Development Bank, funding agencies and development partners.

The above measures will help to bring biotechnology R&D and the research culture in Bangladesh in line with the scientifically more advanced countries of the developing world, and also help to transform the NIB into a world class center of excellence for biotechnology.

The above recommendations have been submitted to the advisor, MoSICT, and he has expressed his support for the ideas. The position paper that expands on and articulates the recommendations will be submitted to the government very soon.

Hopefully, the current non-political government will provide the visionary and enlightened leadership and support required for the development of modern biotechnology in the country, so that it can be optimally harnessed for sustainable economic development of Bangladesh.

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