and biotechnology in local languages and vernacular media.

The Commission should submit an annual report to Parliament on the State of Food and Agricultural Biotechnology in India.

In order to build the national capacity in all areas of risk assessment and biosafety evaluation and monitoring, it will be useful to set up a *National Research Centre for the Safe and Responsible Use of Genetically Modified Crops*. Such a centre could provide the scientific and technical support needed by the proposed National Biotechnology Regulatory and Advancement Commission. The centre should maintain a global database on biosafety assessment procedures and legislation. It should undertake training, capacity-building and networking in the field of biosafety evaluation. *Ultimately, considerations of human health and environmental safety should be the bottom line in risk assessment.*

India has made striking progress in both basic and applied biotechnology as related to medicine and agriculture. The country has also a reasonably well-developed infrastructure for biotechnology research and education. Therefore, India is in a position to move forward vigorously in mobilizing the power of biotechnology for strengthening the national food, water, livelihood and environmental security systems. However, to tap this opportunity, we need a well-defined and forward-looking policy for food and agricultural biotechnology research, training and development.

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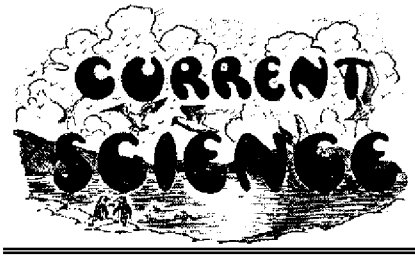
FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Board of Scientific and Industrial Research*

Industrial research was organized on a country-wide basis in America as well as in several countries of the British Empire following the lessons of the last War. In India also the War revealed the helplessness of the country. The transport service was disorganized owing to lack of railway material; supplies of dyes, important chemicals and many important medicines were almost completely stopped and prices of textiles shot up so high as to be beyond the means of poor people. In 1915 the Government of India addressed the Secretary of State as follows:

'After the war India will consider herself entitled to demand the utmost help which the Government can afford to enable her to take a place, so far as circumstances permit, as a manufacturing country.'

This policy was accepted by the Secretary of State and the Indian Industrial Commission, under the Chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holland, was set up as a result. Unfortunately, however, the impetus to industrialization provided by the War died down after a few years and many of the industries which were started during the War languished and died. The gathering storm clouds of a new world war drew the attention of Indian scientists to the unorganized state of scientific and industrial research in India and repeated appeals were made for the constitution of a body on the model of the DSIR. The urgent need for the appointment of such a body was voiced by Professor J. C. Ghosh in his presidential address to the Association at Lahore in 1939 and was reiterated in a resolution of this body last year at Madras. The same point was made by Colonel Chopra in his presidential address to the National Institute of Sciences in Madras last year and by Sir M. Visvesvaraya in an address to the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. We therefore, cordially welcome the recent appointment of the Board of Scientific and Industrial Research by the Government of India in response to the demand of scientists throughout the country. Our thanks are due to the present Commerce Member, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, who lost very little time in appreciating the urgency of the constitution of such a body under the conditions created by the war.

I am a member of the Board and keenly interested in its success. Any observations which I may make upon it are made in a purely constructive spirit with the object of enhancing its utility to the country. In the first place then, I may be permitted to say that although the beginning of the Board, like most beginnings, may be small, its conception must be large and liberal. It must not, in its composition or working, bear the appearance of a mere *ad hoc* body created to meet the immediate exigencies of the war. The demands of the war are no doubt urgent and must have priority over other demands, but the Board should function as a body charged with the organization and promotion of industrial research throughout the country, and coordinate the immediate needs of the war with the long-range policy of the industrial development of the country as a whole. While concentrating on what is immediately required to meet war needs, it must also be in a position to survey the long-term industrial requirements of the country and to plan a programme of research to meet them. Perhaps after the urgent demands of the war are over, its composition can be enlarged and made more representative of the Universities, Government scientific services, the non-official scientific bodies and the industrialists of India so as to enable it to pursue its ultimate plan and policy.

No institution, however well conceived and designed, can flourish except in suitable political atmosphere and conditions. It was the unfortunate experience of the last War that industries created under the stress of the war languished and died in the post-war period for want of encouragement and protection from Government. The activities of the Board will not lead to the creation of new industries unless industrialists are assured of reasonable protection from Government in the post-war period, when foreign competition will be keen.

*Excerpted from the Presidential Address delivered at the Indian Science Congress, Banaras, 1941.