

Japan Minister: Dont be afraid of new science strategy

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Singapore: Japanese scientists are skeptical about the country's new strategy for economic growth, which includes an emphasis on applied biomedical research. Several life science organizations have raised questions about plans for a Japanese version of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Although the heads of more than 50 life science-related academic societies expressed interest in the concept of an NIH-like funding entity, they voiced concerns that the details had not been evaluated thoroughly.

The societies said in a statement that that the government must preserve the bottom-up approach of promoting basic research under which individual researchers pursue their interests. They also demanded that the government should support the development of the next generation of researchers and that it must provide adequate funding to foster true innovation. Other societies issued similar statements.

Mr Akira Amari, minister for economic revitalization, said that, "I would like to stress that we have no intention to try to tie down the people who are involved in very fundamental research. Basic, curiosity-driven research is something that is very important to maintain."

He further added, "How to tie basic research to the practical research of industry. It is very important to have someone in

group who can look at the industrialization or commercialization aspects and provide some direction to the research."