



COMSTech News

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ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

From Coordinator General's Desk



Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary
H.I., S.I., T.I.

The 47th session of Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Niamey, Niger during November 27-28, 2020 ended with renewed commitment towards joint stand on long standing

geopolitical issues, as well as inter-Islamic cooperation for addressing global challenges, including human health crises, climate change, Islamophobia, and economic melt-down due to recent pandemic. In many of the challenges which OIC region faces today, enabling role of science and technology was unequivocally recognized. CFM also commended the key role of COMSTech in the implementation of "OIC STI agenda 2026," in post-covid scenario.

As much as science has served in saving humanity from existential threat through the development of rapid tests, vaccines, and therapeutics during the pandemic, the post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery will also largely depend on the fast and judicious applications of science and technology innovations. This includes the use of S&T in improving the health and hygiene profiles, education and research, nutrition and disease surveillance, etc.

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Coordinator General COMSTech Participates in 47th Session of CFM

Coordinator General, COMSTech Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary participated in the 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Niamey, Niger, on November 27-28, 2020.

During the visit, Prof. Iqbal had sideline bilateral meetings with the Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and the representative of the Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)

He also had meetings with the head/representatives of OIC institutions and discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation between OIC institutions for capacity building in the area of science and technology for the socio-economic growth of the Muslim world.

Representatives of 57 OIC Member States and five Observer States of OIC attended 47th session of the CFM. ■

COMSTech-IFS Fund Over US\$ 0.21 Million Science Projects in OIC States

COMSTech, Islamabad and International Foundation for Science (IFS), Stockholm, Sweden have selected seventeen research projects from 10 OIC member states – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Togo and Uganda for the session 2020. A total funding of US\$ 210,197 has been granted to these projects.

These projects have been granted in the fields of animal production, crop science, food science, forestry/ agroforestry, natural products and social science.

Project funding granted in this session ranges from US\$ 7,000 to 15,000 each project. Four Pakistani scientists have won grants worth Rs. 7.806 million for their research projects in this session.

COMSTech-IFS has so far financed 358 research projects in various disciplines of science and technology in 32 OIC member states by providing US\$ 3.898 million funds.

The 358 research projects from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco,

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Ambassador of Yemen Lauds COMSTECH Services

H.E. Mr. Mohammed Motahar Al Ashabi, Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen in Pakistan paid a visit to COMSTECH on December 18. He met with Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH and discussed programmes and new initiatives of COMSTECH.

The Coordinator General gave him a detailed briefing on COMSTECH achievements and current programmes and future plans. Prof. Iqbal also shared with him the contribution of COMSTECH programmes made to Yemen.

Coordinator General informed him about the new initiative of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence comprise of leading institutions of Pakistan and OIC countries and invited Yemeni students to benefit from the research excellence through visits.

H.E. Mr. Mohammed Motahar Al Ashabi lauded COMSTECH efforts, its contribution to the OIC member states for scientific

and technological uplift and appreciated the current programmes and the vision.

The dignitaries also explored the avenues of bilateral joint initiatives for the development of socio-economic conditions in the OIC member states.

During the meeting the Ambassador of Yemen presented the souvenir of honor to Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and the Coordinator General COMSTECH presented the shield of memento to his excellency. ■



COMSTECH Int'l Workshop and Exhibition on AI in Healthcare

Realizing the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the healthcare systems, COMSTECH organized a two-day workshop and exhibition on AI in healthcare in collaboration with Sir Syed CASE Institute of Technology on November 24-25, 2020. The event was organized under the kind patronage of Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman (FRS., N.I., H.I., S.I., T.I.), Chairman Prime Minister Task Force on IT.

Over 100 people participated, 10 companies and 2 labs exhibited their AI products for healthcare, 9 experts gave poster presentations and 17 speakers from Pakistan, UK and Austria gave lectures in this 2-day event.

The objective of this event was to bring together the researchers, industrialists, and practitioners interested in the specification, design, and development of AI to cultivate smart healthcare systems.

Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH



said in his inaugural speech that we will have to live with new normal now. He said that the paradigm of development has changed and now we have to invest in human resources to accelerate the development of any country. He urged that now it's time to fund innovation, and centers of excellence in artificial intelligence. Dr. Iqbal highlighted the role of COMSTECH in science diplomacy and informed the audience about the recent launch of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence, a joint initiative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan and COMSTECH.

Dr. Shoaid A. Khan, Chancellor, Sir Syed CASE Institute of Technology, talked about the current status and use of AI. He highlighted the importance of AI and showed the use and

benefits of this technology in general and in the area of healthcare. He stressed the need to have a policy and strategy to nurture, adopt, develop, and implement AI in Pakistan to ultimately reap the benefits of this technology. Dr. Shoab said that it is most important to convince people for digitalization because there is a resistance to it and without digitalization the application of AI is impossible. He pointed out that there is a big gap between academic education,



research work and the practical market. He encouraged the participants to learn and apply AI and assured that it has tremendous future.

He mentioned that technology billionaire individuals are more rich than many countries in the world due to the application of modern technologies. He urged that Pakistan must have strategy to trigger the potential of artificial intelligence. ■

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From Coordinator General's Desk

COMSTECH has launched major programmes in these fields, such as COMSTECH consortium of excellence, COMSTECH research fellowships in the fields of virology and vaccine development, distinguished scholars' program, COMSTECH alliance of virology laboratories, and training programs for technical personnel.

We invite institutions and scholars of OIC region to actively participate in, and benefit from these activities, and help COMSTECH in developing inter-Islamic cooperation for a greater human good. ■

Message of Dr. Arif Alvi President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan On the occasion of 22nd International Science Conference of IAS



I wish to congratulate the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) on organizing 22nd International Science Conference in Amman and commend the Kingdom of Jordan for its patronage of this important event. I would also like to welcome the

distinguished Fellows of the IAS and other participants of the conference who have gathered to deliberate on the important theme of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI): Landscape in the Islamic Countries. I would also like to appreciate the endeavors of COMSTech in fostering collaborations, developing STI and Human Resource Development (HRD) in the OIC member states.

Humanity is faced with serious challenges of global dimension, such as climate change, water shortage, food security, natural disasters and energy crisis. The impact of these challenges is thought to be graver on the developing countries, including

most of the OIC countries, because of their weak economies, lower level of resilience, insufficient expertise in science and technology, rapidly growing population, and dwindling natural resources. In this regard, importance of science, technology and innovation for the socio-economic well-being and political empowerment of nations cannot be overemphasized.

The Islamic scholars have made outstanding contributions to knowledge and science. We must take all the necessary steps to revive our past glory in this realm. Foremost in this regard is advancement in education and science. We have no dearth of talent and we are capable of devising credible strategies to tackle global challenges facing the Muslim world today.

In the end, I would like to express my deep appreciation to HRH Prince Al-Hasan, the Patron of IAS, Professor Abdel Salam Majali, the President of IAS and his colleagues and wish the 22nd conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences all the success. ■

COMSTech Confers Awards on OIC Scientists

COMSTech conferred awards in the categories of basic sciences and excellence in science and technology to the award laureates from Algeria, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey in a ceremony held at COMSTech on November 11, 2020. The award shields and certificates were presented to the Ambassadors of the respective countries by the Coordinator General, COMSTech Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary.

H. E. Mr. Ibrahim Said, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Egypt, received the awards on behalf of Egyptian award winners. H.E. Mr. Amrane Foudil, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Algeria received the award on behalf of Algerian award winner, and H. E. Mrs. Esra Sen, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Turkey, received the award on behalf of Turkish award winner.

COMSTech decided in 1996 to institute science awards to recognize outstanding research work carried out by the scientists who are citizens of, and working in, OIC member states. Each award carries a certificate, shield of honor and a cash prize. These awards are conferred upon the recipients by H.E. President of Pakistan (Chairman COMSTech).

In the category of basic sciences COMSTech awards in four basic fields; Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics. Each award carries a cash prize of US\$ 5000.

Dr. Ramy Karam Aziz Henein of Egypt won the basic sciences award in biology and Dr. Engin Umut Akkaya of Turkey, in Chemistry.

Best Young Researcher Award, Best Scientific Book Award, Award for Patent, and Best Research Paper Award are conferred under the category of excellence in science and technology. Each award carries a cash prize along with a shield of honor and a certificate of recognition.

Dr. Mehmet Atilla Tasdelen of Turkey and Dr. Farrokh Aminifar of Iran won the young researcher award. The Best Scientific Book award won by Dr. Salah Sabry Ahmed Obayya, Patent Award won Dr. Ibrahim El-Sherbiny, Best Research Paper in Biology award won by Dr. Maha Nasr Sayed Aly, and the Best Research Paper in Chemistry award won by Dr. Mohamed H. Alkordi, of Egypt. The Best Research Paper in Physics award won by Dr. Abdelaali Boudjemaa of Algeria. ■



COMSTech and MoFA Launch Consortium of Excellence

COMSTech and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan launched "COMSTech Consortium of Excellence (CCoE)" comprising upon leading academic and research institutions of Pakistan and OIC member states in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The launching ceremony of CCoE held at COMSTech under the chairmanship of Coordinator General,



COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary while Mr. Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan was the chief guest.

The Vice Chancellors and senior officials of Quaid e Azam University, Islamia University Bahawalpur, National University of Sciences and Technology, Government College University, Lahore, Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of

partnership. He said that Pakistan has done a lot in the area of science and technology and now it's time to reap the benefit by showcasing the progress of Pakistan. He said that this forum would bring technology to Pakistan and would help in internationalization of the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The COMSTech - MoFA collaboration will open new avenues in science diplomacy. Dr. Iqbal mentioned that COMSTech being the apex body in OIC science arena gives Pakistan a leading role in the area of science technology and innovation. He discussed the current state of OIC member states in the field of science and technology and provided a comprehensive report of COMSTech activities.

CCoE is launched under the "Science Diplomacy Initiative" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of Pakistan. Mr. Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan said that the higher education institutions are shaping the future of Pakistan. He said that the CCoE initiative is conceived to provide the platform to the leading universities of Pakistan and the universities of the OIC member states to cooperate, collaborate and showcase their achievements. He informed that the MoFA has launched multipurpose science diplomacy initiative to create linkages between partners and popularize science. He said that this forum will help in trade boost. The Foreign Secretary mentioned that COMSTech has



Engineering Sciences and Technology, Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, and University of the Punjab participated in the launching ceremony of CCoE.

In his inaugural address, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Choudhary, said the purpose of CCoE is to put our efforts to achieve excellence in

responsibility to enhance science, technology and innovation in OIC member states and commended the current efforts of COMSTech and its leadership for initiating new projects like CCoE.

Vice chancellors and senior officials of the CCoE founding member universities of Pakistan shared their current programmes and offered cooperation and support to collaborate and cooperate under the umbrella of CCoE. ■

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COMSTech-IFS Fund Over US\$ 0.21 Million Science Projects...

Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somali, Sudan, Suriname, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda have been financed under this program.

COMSTech and IFS agreed in February 1998 to enter into a collaborative program to strengthen the capacity in developing

countries which are members of OIC to conduct relevant and high-quality research in sciences related to the management, use and conservation of biological resources. The program is funded in equal parts by COMSTech and IFS. ■

COMSTech and Int'l Turkic Academy Enter into MoU



International Turkic Academy and COMSTech sign MoU at COMSTech Secretariat on December 23 to strengthen cooperation and collaboration for the promotion of science & technology in OIC member states.

On the occasion of MoU signing ceremony, President of the Int'l Turkic Academy, Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali, appreciated COMSTech for holding Al-Farabi forum successfully.

Dr. Kydyrali said that our relations are not only limited to the relations between institutions, we have great relationship between nations. He assured that on his return he will meet with the president of Kazakhstan to share these activities with him. He said we have signed many MoUs with different institutions of Pakistan. He said that he strongly believes that COMSTech will play a strong role for further enhancing the Pak-Kazak relations.

Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary appreciated the organization of OIC Science Summit by Kazakhstan in 2017. He said that we will soon organize an international forum on Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal in collaboration with international Turkic Academy, Kazakhstan. Dr. Iqbal assured that we will be partner in these activities.

Both institutions have agreed to be engaged in various joint activities such as organizing forums on Al-Farabi, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Ulugh Beg Mirza and establishing Turkic Academy Library at COMSTech and incorporating leading universities of Pakistan in the network of universities of International Turkic Academy.

The Turkic Academy was founded on 25 May 2010 at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. ■



COMSTech and Al-Shifa Trust Ink MoU to Enhance Research in Ophthalmology and Prevent Blindness in OIC Member States

Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi and COMSTech — OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation — Islamabad, signed an MoU to build capacity in ophthalmology and prevent blindness in OIC member states through providing training and conducting eye camps in different OIC member states.



The MoU ceremony held at COMSTech headquarters and signed by Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech and Maj. Gen. Rehmat Khan (R), President, Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital,

Rawalpindi. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of The Gambia, Prof. Dr. Faqir Muhammad Anjum and Mr. Mohammad Adeel, Assistant Director, Science Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan were also present at the occasion.

According to the MoU, Pakistan Institute of Ophthalmology (PIO) the academic wing of Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital will impart training in ophthalmology, optometry and orthoptics, public health, ophthalmologists, ophthalmic technicians, biomedical technicians, ophthalmic nurses and ophthalmic nursing assistants of OIC region.

Al-Shifa Trust eye hospital will offer observerships for 4-12 weeks and 1-year clinical fellowships to candidates from OIC countries in the subspecialties, such as cornea and refractive surgery, Vitreo-retina, Pediatric ophthalmology, Glaucoma and Orbit and Oculoplastic.

Al-Shifa center for community ophthalmology will carry out wide-spread outreach programs for the prevention of blindness in OIC member states. A delegation of highly qualified and experienced surgeons will be sent to the pre-selected OIC member states to undertake surgical camps for cataract as well as perform advanced surgical procedures for diseases such as Cornea, Glaucoma, Obits and Oculoplastic, Vitreo-retina, Pediatric eye disorders and, Ocular oncology.

Eye camps in Kampala, (Uganda) Niamey, (Niger) and Serrekunda, (Gambia) will be organized this year.

Special emphasis will be given to carry out research in areas of Ocular Epidemiological Studies, Ocular Imaging, Ocular Genetics, Data Analytics, Cytokines and Biomarkers for Ocular Pathologies, Clinical Trials, Clinical Studies and Ocular Therapeutics.

COMSTech would provide Al-Shifa Trust support, cooperation, and collaboration for all activities planned and organized in OIC member states.

Interested OIC member states are requested to contact Dean, Pakistan Institute of ophthalmology at following Email: drwajidalikhan@yahoo.com ■



Alvi Urges OIC States to Join Hands for Ummah's Renaissance

President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi inaugurated international conference on Al-Farabi at COMSTech in the pleasant morning of December 21st. The two-day conference was organized jointly by COMSTech and the government of Kazakhstan to celebrate the 1150th anniversary of Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, the great Muslim philosopher and scientist who hailed from the lands which are now the part of Kazakhstan.



Dr. Arif Alvi, pointed out that the pace of scientific developments in the present era is so rapid that will widen the gap further between the developed and developing Muslim countries, if immediate and focussed actions are not taken. He identified the spirit of enquiry and boldness as characteristic of the Muslim scientists and philosophers in the glorious days of Muslim science and philosophy.

He urged the OIC member states to join hands with this prestigious institution and work together for the renaissance of the Ummah. He said that COMSTech is only institution of OIC hosted by Pakistan and lauded COMSTech efforts for promotion of scientific cooperation and the uplift of the OIC countries.

The two-day Conference included lectures, both in person and online, by leading international experts on Islamic thought, history and philosophy.

Prof. Asad Q. Ahmed of Berkeley, Prof. Peter Adamson from Munich, Prof. Ann Druart from Washington, Prof. Iftikhar Malik from Bath UK, Prof. Galimkir Mutanov of Al-Farabi University of Kazakhstan, and Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali of the International Turkic Academy were the key speakers of the conference.

Assistant Secretary General of OIC, Ambassador Askar Mussinov, and the Kazakhstan Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mr. Berik Aryn were the distinguished guests.

The speakers talked on different aspects of the life, and contributions of Al-Farabi as the pioneer who served as a bridge between the ancient Greek thought, philosophy of Aristotle and the Islamic civilization.

For his work Al-Farabi came to be known as the Second Master, the ultimate authority in philosophy after Aristotle.

The conference had six sessions, followed by a closing session with a panel discussion on "Science and the Islamic world - A philosophical assessment".

The Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary announced in his address that COMSTech and

the Turkic Academy would organize similar forums on renowned Pakistani philosopher Sir Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, in Turkmenistan, and on the eminent astronomer scientist Ulugh Beg in Uzbekistan.



In his address, the Assistant Secretary General of OIC ensured the full support for the development of science and technology in OIC member states. Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali, the President of International Turkic Academy appreciated COMSTech for organizing the forum on such a



renowned scholar and resolved to take this tradition further and hold such forums on other renowned muslim scholars.

Dr. Galimkair Mutanov, Rector, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University delivered special lecture in the concluding session of the forum. He said that the most important task for the

humanity is to recognize the creator who made it conscious. Wisdom and science are reflected in the Islam, he mentioned. He suggested that we should pay special attention to the Golden age of Muslim thought and define the issues rises in the Muslim philosophy in relation to religion and science.

After his lecture one-hour long panel discussion session was held. Dr. Ehsan Masood, from UK, Dr. Nomanul Haq, Dr. Ghazna Khalid and Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary were the experts of the discussion session to answer and discuss the questions of the scholars from the audience and the session was moderated by Dr. Khurshid Hasanain.

This forum was attended over 120 scholars from Pakistan, United Kingdom, Kazakhstan, Cameroon, Nepal, Somalia and Sudan in-person and virtually, and 15 national and international experts gave talks. ■

