



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.

Science and technology play an extremely important role in economic development and societal well-being of nations. The second Summit on science and technology, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, held on June 16, 2021,

ended with reaffirmation of political support for science and technology based sustainable and inclusive development. The Summit has appreciated the contributions of the COMSTech and its Chairman, the President of Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi for steering the implementation of STI agenda 2026 approved by the 1st Summit on science and technology held in 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The outcome document "Abu Dhabi Declaration" has mandated COMSTech to coordinate the efforts of member states and relevant OIC institutions for the implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026, and to develop a comprehensive roadmap in collaboration with OIC GS, and other international partners for establishing technology transfer mechanisms amongst the OIC member states with the goal of developing national and regional innovation ecosystem.

COMSTech is mandated to start preparatory work in coordination with the OIC GS to hold the first session of the Senior Officials Committee and the

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OIC Summit Commends COMSTech Efforts

The second OIC Summit on Science and Technology held virtually which was hosted by the United Arab Emirates. The Summit commended the efforts of COMSTech for forging multinational cooperation. H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, the President of Pakistan and Chairman, COMSTech delivered his recorded statement in the inaugural session. He said, COMSTech, is moving forward on STI Agenda 2026, in spite of severe financial crunch.

As Chairman COMSTech, he proposed to place focus on African member states for health and agriculture development with particular emphasis on biosaline agriculture, COVID-19 related technology and capacity building, initiation of research fellowships and technical training programs for African science community, and addressing challenge of environmental degradation and rehabilitation.

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COMSTech Announces 500 Scholarships for Palestinian Student

COMSTech announced 500 scholarships for Palestinian students and scholars in partnership with Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP), and member institutions of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence. It was stated by Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech while addressing a press conference at COMSTech office. He stated that over 370 scholarships for Palestinian students have been committed by 24 member institutions of APSUP, while 130 scholarships have been promised by public sector universities of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence.

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Minister for S&T Visits COMSTech

Minister for science and technology, Mr. Shibli Faraz visited COMSTech secretariat. Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary extended him a warm reception, along with his team.

The Coordinator General gave him a detailed presentation on COMSTech establishment, aims and objectives, past achievements, present programmes and future initiatives, including preparation of science profiles of OIC member states, COMSTech research publication program, research fellowships, technician training program, COMSTech initiative for health and innovation in Africa, and OIC technology innovation portal.

The Minister appreciated the current achievements of COMSTech and future plans devised for the socio-economic development of Ummah. ■

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Palestinian Envoy Commends COMSTECH Scholarships for Palestine

The Ambassador of Palestine, Mr. Ahmed Jawad A. Rabaei visited COMSTECH on the invitation of the Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary to discuss the mechanism for execution of 500 scholarships for Palestinian students announced recently and explore avenues of mutual cooperation in the area of science and technology.

Prof. Choudhary informed the Ambassador that the programme management unit has been established at COMSTECH to execute this programme. He said, that Palestinian students would be fully facilitated for enrollment in Pakistani universities. Prof. Choudhary also mentioned that online education facilities would also be provided to Palestinian students by Pakistani universities.

Prof. Choudhary, said that COMSTECH has launched a special program offering research fellowships, technicians training & workshop participation grants for Palestinian students.

Mr. Rabaei appreciated COMSTECH announcement of scholarships and fellowships for Palestinian students and assured full participation of Government of Palestine and Embassy of Palestine in scholarship program and its further facilitation for implementation of this programme. The Ambassador, on the behalf of government and Palestinian people, thanked COMSTECH, APSUP

and member institutions of COMSTECH-MOFA Consortium of Excellence for offering 500 scholarships for Palestinian students.

He appreciated the efforts and support extended by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan to Palestinian people. The Ambassador offered one million Olive trees to COMSTECH for plantation in universities and institutions that have offered these scholarships. COMSTECH and the embassy of Palestine agreed to work together expeditiously to chalk out the modalities of the work plan. Both the dignitaries exchanged souvenirs of memorandum. The senior officials of COMSTECH were also present in the meeting. ■



Pakistan Needs Systematic Approach to Combat Poor Food Quality, Experts

Insufficient intake of balanced diet rich in proteins, vitamins and micronutrients (Fe, Zn), folates, and unaffordability/inaccessibility to food rich in nutrition, along with adulteration, lack of education about healthy food and imbalanced food habits are main reasons for stunted growth in children and due to Iron deficiency anemia in women, which is increasing at alarming rate, said National and International experts while speaking at International Webinar on “A Way Forward to Food Quality and Food Safety”, held online.

More than 1000 participants attended the event virtually. The event was organized by University of Agriculture, Faisalabad and Pakistan Agricultural Scientists Forum (PAS Forum) in collaboration with, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FPCCI), National Alliance for Safe Food (NAFS), UK-Pakistan Science and Innovation Global Network (UPSIGN), COMSTECH and Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD).

Mian Abdul Rasheed from FPCCI inaugurated the event by offering full support from the industry to work with academia to address the food quality crisis in Pakistan through innovations. Prof. Khurshid Hasanain, Advisor COMSTECH emphasized the need for collaboration among Muslim world to tackle the food quality crises and learn from each other. Dr. Omer

Mukhtar from PCSIR Labs highlighted the nutritional status of Pakistan population indicating severe issue of micronutrient malnutrition in Pakistan. Food fortification, supplementation and biofortification are some of solutions to address the challenges, highlighted by International speakers, Professor Nicola Lowe from UCLAN University, Dr. Jalil Miyan from University of Manchester and Dr. Khalid Mahmood, UPSIN/Rothamsted Research.

Access to safe food free from pathogens, chemicals, pesticide residues is another challenge which need to be addressed through transformation in food systems especially food value chain, and promoting the use of fair & clearly written food labels. Pakistan faces the challenge of access to cold chain that add another layer affecting the shelf life of perishable food products that includes milk, meat and fresh vegetables, noted the experts.

An important highlight of the webinar panel discussion was how farmers and consumers could take advantage of the low-cost technologies to enhance the shelf life and quality of the food products. There is a need to create a culture of responsibility on maintaining the minimum food standards from farm to fork. The consumer awareness could play important role to implement such change in the food system, discussed the panelists. ■

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OIC Summit Commends COMSTECH Efforts

Dr. Alvi appreciated COMSTECH efforts and urged member states to mobilize resources and come forward with their contributions to COMSTECH programmes.

OIC Summit appreciated the leadership of H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi for promoting intra-OIC scientific and technological cooperation for the implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026 and advancement of science, technology and innovation in the member states, especially the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The Summit resolved to further intensify efforts to fulfil the goals and targets of the OIC STI Agenda 2026 through a series of focused initiatives and programs to be proposed by COMSTECH in coordination with General Secretariat and other relevant OIC institutions and called upon the member states, who have the resources, to consider providing

necessary financial and technical support to COMSTECH and General Secretariat to carry out initiatives.

The Summit called on COMSTech to develop a comprehensive roadmap for establishing technology transfer mechanisms amongst the OIC member states in collaboration with General Secretariat and other international partners.

The Summit commended the efforts of COMSTech for forging multinational cooperation on varietal development, preservation and integration into the seed system, and appreciated the efforts of the General Secretariat and COMSTech for identifying leading institutions and scientists of the member states and mapping their science publication profiles and called upon COMSTech to establish links with the goal of promoting exchange of knowledge and expertise among these institutions.■

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COMSTECH Announces 500 Scholarships for Palestinian Students

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH said that Palestinian people are under aggression and siege by occupant forces. Palestinians now have limited access to higher education and research facilities. Over seven decades of occupation has systematically destroyed educational and socio-economic infra-structures of Palestinian state. In order to support them, COMSTECH launched a special program offering research fellowships, technicians training & workshop participation grants for Palestinian students, and today's announcement is first milestone achieved under this program, he said.

Mr. Murtaza Noor, Media Advisor to Coordinator General COMSTECH and Coordinator Inter-University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences appreciated the gesture of Pakistani universities for offering scholarships to the students of the state of Palestine.

Three hundred and seventy scholarships have been announced by twenty two APSUP member private sector universities: Superior University Lahore, University of Lahore, Iqra University Karachi, Abasyn University Peshawar, Alhamd Islamic University Quetta, Jinnah University for Women Karachi, CECOS University Peshawar, Greenwich University Karachi, Indus University Karachi, Institute of Southern Punjab (ISP) Multan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Karachi, National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (FAST) Islamabad, Preston University Islamabad, Qurtuba University Peshawar, Sarhad University Peshawar, CUSIT, Peshawar, Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology Karachi, University of

South Asia Lahore, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Textile Institute of Pakistan, Karachi, SBB Dewan University Karachi, Muslim Youth University Islamabad, Alkhair University, AJK, and University of Faisalabad.

Whereas one hundred and thirty scholarships have been offered by thirteen public sector higher education and research institutions, including International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi, Government College University, Lahore, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad, NETKENT University, Turkey, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), National Institute of Health, Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (GIKI), COMSATS University Islamabad, Al Shifa Eye Trust, NED University of Engineering and Technology (NEDUET), Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology (KFUEIT), University of Lahore, and University of the Punjab.

Prof. Choudhary extended thanks to the Chairman APSUP and vice chancellors of the universities for their timely support, and overwhelming response for this noble cause. ■



Nigerian Delegation Visits COMSTECH

A delegation of 30 Nigerian officials who are participants of a senior executive course at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Nigeria, visited COMSTECH. The delegation was on study tour to Pakistan with the purpose to benefit from Pakistan's best practices in the context of policy implementation. Coordinator General, COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary extended warm welcome to the delegation at COMSTECH Headquarters.

Prof. Choudhary gave a detailed briefing on COMSTech establishment, objectives, past activities, progress and future plans to the delegation. He briefed the delegation on the benefits of COMSTech programmes to OIC member states including Nigeria in detail.

Prof. Choudhary highlighted the facilities available at COMSTECH for capacity building activities. The tour was part of training programme of the senior executive course of National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Nigeria. ■



COMSTECH and NTD Network Collaborate Against Leishmaniasis

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a major health and economic burden on member states of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The control and elimination of NTDs require a scaled-up integration of global mass treatment programmes, along with new tools and technologies to tackle these diseases. COMSTECH, in collaboration with A Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases known as the NTD Network, has launched a virtual lecture series for researchers across the Muslim world and beyond.

The NTD Network, funded by Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), is a consortium of academic researchers from South America, Asia, and the UK, seeking new therapeutic solutions to Leishmaniasis and Chagas disease.

Both COMSTECH and the NTD Network aim to promote global scientific cooperation and build research capacity to find new and better therapeutic solutions for NTDs.

The first lecture of this series was delivered by Professor Jeremy Mottram, the NTD Network institutional lead for York University. He is a Professor of Pathogen Biology, York Biomedical Research Institute, University of York, United Kingdom.

Dr. Mottram said that, I am pleased to have this opportunity to share the work we are doing within our NTD network - a global network for neglected tropical diseases, and to have this opportunity to tell some of the COMSTech members about

the work that we do and hopefully to promote further interactions in future.

He said NTD Network is based in university of Durham, UK, and links researchers interested in neglected tropical diseases with four hubs one in the UK, Pakistan, India and a hub in South America. These four regional hubs allow a number of research institutes and research groups to come together to address some of the fundamental questions around early phase drug discovery. He said that we have a mixture of parasitologists, chemical biologists, structural biologists and some immunologists that are taking an interdisciplinary and a collaborative approach to seek new solutions.

He mentioned that this disease identified in 1903, and no new registered drugs developed in last 20 years and the impact of discovery science is limited, however the prospects are promising. He informed that Leishmaniasis drugs is an issue, and there is a need for the development of new drugs.

He informed that one of the major ways in which understanding of parasite and its interaction with the hosts is going to change through the ability of CRISPR to edit genomes of the parasites. Either for example to understand the basic biology or to make attenuated live vaccines and conduct those types of experiments.

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH welcomed the speaker and introduced him to the participants. More than 200 participants from OIC member states attended this lecture online. ■

COMSTECH Webinar on Thermodynamic Systems

COMSTECH organized international webinar on “Thermodynamic systems in biology and physics” delivered by Prof. Dr. Utkir A. Rozikov, of V. I. Romanovskii Institute of Mathematics, Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Thursday, online.

Prof. Rozikov discussed thermodynamic system of biology and physics and defined the thermodynamic systems by discussing available mathematical models and giving examples of real world problems.

He talked about sex determination systems of species, and said that in some species of reptiles, including alligators, some turtles, and a few birds sex is determined by the temperature provided to the egg. He described that if you give same egg hot temperature it would produce male and the same egg will produce female against cooler temperature. Prof. Rozikov said temperature and time are two dynamics that bring changes in the system. ■



COMSTECH Offers Free Online Courses

COMSTECH, in collaboration with Latif Ebrahim Jamal National Science Information Center, provides access to thousands of courses delivered by world authorities in science, engineering, agriculture, social sciences, economics and other fields free of cost online for school, college and university level learners. Please visit www.lej4learning.com.pk to learn anything of your choice free of cost.

Speech of the President of Pakistan to the 2nd OIC S&T Summit

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen Assalamu Alaikum. It is my profound privilege to greet the government of the United Arab Emirates and the OIC General Secretariat for organizing this very important event in the midst of very challenging times. The theme of the Summit "science technology and innovation and opening new horizons" is significant from all aspects considering the time in the world today, considering the fact that the world is making tremendous progress in different areas.

COVID-19 as we faced it in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world, pointed out to the fact that there is a necessity of cooperation between nations, and the ability to discipline themselves and to organize. Pakistan has been a profound success as far as trying to handle COVID-19, considering what has been happening in the neighboring countries. Pakistan with better organization, with improved discipline, with keeping our mosques open with SOPs, we were able to manage COVID very well, that is what the direction of the Muslim world has to be in the new era.

As far as brick and mortar situations are concerned with increasing the production of industry is concerned, it takes a relatively long time but Innovation and change are happening much faster. Innovation and change are happening from the information and discoveries from the deepest corner of the cosmos to the inside of the atom as far as quantum physics is concerned. For the Muslim world to increase its development technologies and development processes, it may be difficult to follow the path of the brick and mortar systems, but in science and technology the world is open. It is improving very fast, it is changing very fast and what we want is that the Muslim world to become a part of this bandwagon which is coming up.

Let me talk to you about what changes happening, people may not realize the change in science and technology is much faster, is much bigger than whatever you can imagine. We have to be harnessing its energy, there are exponential technologies and let me give a difference between exponential technologies, exponential progress and linear progress. In the



traditional system of our economy that means factories, productions. Linear progress means that we take every step goes a little high, for example 30 steps mean only 30 meters, exponential change means that 30 exponential steps mean we go 30 times around the world. It is as bigger that, and I believe that the changes are happening very fast. What has brought this change about for the Muslim world we must realize because this is the easiest way to make progress, and it starts from the intellect, it does not start from aircraft carriers or planes or factories, it starts from the intellect.

Our people have to be educated because the world is seeing for the first time an abundance of computation, the ability to harness data to look at data that is biggest burden which is happening. It is the abundance of time as people are able to handle data with this computation abundance people have the time on their hands to do much more than what they could have done. It is also an abundance of capital what does that mean because there is venture capital available there are sovereign funds which are available in all these areas and they are going without indication towards countries, towards race, and whenever there is an idea available there is crowd funding, venture capital and sovereign funds are going in those areas. So, what I'm saying is the Muslim world must recognize the abundance of computation,

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Speech of the President of Pakistan to the 2nd OIC S&T Summit

**I believe that the Muslim era,
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COVID-19 related technology and capacity building initiatives, COVID-19 alone means that if we get ready for COVID-19, the way we have gotten ready, it has improved in Pakistan and a lot of Muslim countries. It has improved our outreach to the common person and on the same wagons we can work for

I urge to look at fastest growing disruptive technologies, these are not capital hungry

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the Muslim era, the Muslim renaissance is going to come through science and technology development, the way Muslims carried knowledge - before the medieval and before renaissance in the west - of science and technology to the next generation. I believe that time has come again, and we look forward to cooperation between member states towards this. Thank you. ■

President of Pakistan Urges Rapid Revival of STIO

The STIO was formed as a specialized organ of the OIC to implement decisions and resolutions of the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and Ministers in Charge of Science and Technology – COMSTECH General Assembly. Nineteen countries joined STIO as founding members and its founding meeting was held in 2010 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. However, since its formation the STIO has not been able to function as envisaged due to unavailability of resources. ■



Transformation into Low Carbon Cities will Develop Local Green Economy: Malaysian PM

He was addressing at the launch of the virtual Malaysia Low Carbon Cities Conference 2021. He said to achieve a significant carbon emission reduction target, the National Low Carbon Cities Master Plan was launched to provide complete guidelines for state governments and local authorities in developing low carbon cities in their areas.■

Mauritania to Develop Green Hydrogen Production Plant

Nouakchott (UNA-OIC) – The Mauritanian government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Australian Renewable Energy Development Company, CWP Global, to develop a green hydrogen production plant with a capacity of 30 GW. ■

Kazakhstan Rolls-out First Batch of Homegrown COVID Vaccine

Deputy Prime Minister Tugzhanov said the creation of the vaccine allowed Kazakhstan to become one of five countries in the world that have developed their own anti-coronavirus vaccines, proving the high potential of domestic science.

Last October Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev gave specific instructions related to the development of the homegrown vaccine. The first

The next batch, another 50,000 doses, will be produced in May. There are plans to step up production of the homegrown vaccine by 500-600,000 doses per month in the future. Earlier Director-General of the Research Institute for Biological Safety Problems Kunsulu Zakarya said Kazakhstan's vaccine had 100% efficacy in the first stage of clinical trials and 96% efficacy in the second stage of clinical trials. It can be stored at temperatures of between 2 and 8°C making it easier to transport and store for up to one year in a freezer. ■

IsDB, ISFD Hold Cataract Surgeries in Djibouti

Jeddah (UNA-OIC) – Within the framework of the 2nd phase of the Alliance to Fight Avoidable Blindness, the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development have executed cataract surgery campaigns in the city of Djibouti and surrounding rural localities.

Under these campaigns, financed by the Azerbaijan International Development Agency, 11,709 patients were given vision screening and 1,032 cataract treatment surgeries were conducted.■

OIC Welcomes Morocco's Initiative to Manufacture COVID-19 Vaccine

Jeddah (UNA-OIC) – The OIC-GS welcomed Morocco's decision to produce COVID19 vaccine and other vaccines, in light of signing of three agreements with China, under the patronage of King Mohammed VI. Morocco will be able to produce five million doses of COVID19 vaccine per month, with the investment of \$500 million.

The OIC General Secretariat congratulated the Moroccan leadership on this landmark achievement. ■



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