

# Comstech News



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OIC MINISTERIAL STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

## From Coordinator General's Desk



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

Ever increasing impact of climate change pose the biggest threat to human survival and wellbeing.

Planet Earth is fast heating up, as reported in the recent IPCC report 2021. Climate change effects every aspect of human life and lives of fellow beings. Its effect global food security, availability of safe drinking water, health, and biodiversity are well documented based on scientific data. Unfortunately, many of the most climate vulnerable countries are in the OIC region. Recent cyclones in Mozambique, effect of sea level rise on south west Bangladesh, forest fires in Indonesia, and Turkey, sinking of coastal communities of mega cities such as Jakarta and Karachi, as well as Maldives, etc are ample manifestations of the devastating impact of climate change. Recent 26th UN summit on climate change, Glasgow, UK, has called for all-inclusive global actions to save the planet from an irreversible and catastrophic future. This universal call of action demands local actions to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, and prevent land degradation, and deforestation. [→ ON PAGE 2](#)

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## President Alvi Urges OIC States to Nurture Virtual Hybrid Cooperation

COMSTECH and UK-based organizations SAWIE & UPSIGN organized World Food Day 2021 at COMSTECH Secretariat on October. 14. The President of Pakistan graced the occasion as chief guest. He stressed COMSTECH and OIC states to strive for nurturing hybrid cooperation among OIC states to achieve excellence in socio-economic development. Dr. Alvi emphasized the need of taking right decision at the right time in agriculture.

He urged the world politicians to stop fighting and divert trillions of dollars being spent on the wars to ensuring provision of healthy food to the growing population of the world and bringing the hunger to an end.

Dr. Alvi advised OIC states to ensure intensive use of technology to increase yield. He said we must have to reduce the gap between the farmer and the technologist. He informed that it is a right time to take decision to grab the opportunities being offered by the emerging silicon revolution. He said that OIC states must enhance cooperation on sharing their learned skills, and acquired knowledge to benefit each other. We must timely



use new technique like speedy gene editing CRISPR-CASS tech to develop new seeds.

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, the Coordinator General COMSTECH, welcomed the participants and said the inability to feed growing population in OIC states is a failure of many nations. He said food insecurity often puts nation's internal and external security at risk. He informed about various programmes of COMSTECH in the field of agriculture and nutrition.

Dr. Yerlan Baidaulet, Director General, Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), Kazakhstan addressed the session and appreciated the efforts of the

President of Pakistan for the development of S&T in OIC region. He said that food security is critical, and we should initiate programs and projects to achieve zero hunger in our nations. He invited COMSTECH to cooperate with IOFS in implementing its strategy to achieve food security goals in OIC states.

Dr. Khalid Mahmood, co-founder of SAWIE, said Pakistan is facing huge issue with food security due to climate change. He said the country has 8 million small holder farmer who own less than 5 Acre, and have low crop yield due to lack of access to quality inputs, access to finance, real time knowledge of crop health, climate change and changing weather patterns have created uncertainty in the growing conditions.

Dr. Mahmood — with President of Pakistan's permission — launched the SAWIE app and said that this app would help farmers to achieve optimum yield. He said that SAWIE app is a satellite based ecosystem solution to guide farmers to better manage their crops through training videos and real time satellite linked knowledge on [→ ON PAGE 3](#)

## PROF. M. IQBAL CHOUDHARY HONoured WITH TOP MUSLIM WORLD SCIENCE AWARD THE MUSTAFA PRIZE

The Mustafa Prize — International symbol of scientific excellence — for the year of 2021 has been awarded to Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary of Pakistan in the field of bio-organic chemistry.

The Mustafa Prize, a top science and technology award, is granted biennially to the top researchers and scientists of the Islamic world in four categories: "Life and Medical Science and Technology", "Nanoscience and Nanotechnology", "Information and Communication Science and

Technology", and "All areas of science and technology". The Mustafa Prize was established in 2012 as a symbol of scientific excellence at the international level, and it is regarded as Nobel prize of the Muslim world.

Five scientists each from Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Lebanon and Morocco have been awarded The Mustafa Prize in their respective field of study.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary is world renowned medicinal chemist. He has

published 1,175 research papers in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry in international journals, 76 books and 40 chapters in books published by major US and European press. He has secured 40 US patents so far.

Dr. Iqbal's work has been cited by the researchers from around the world by 27,407 times and his h-index is 70. By now 94

national and international scholars have completed their PhD degrees under his supervision. [→ ON PAGE 3](#)



## Capacity Building for Clinical Trials Crucial, experts

COMSTECH & Maroof International Hospital jointly inaugurated 2-day international training in randomized controlled trials, at COMSTECH Secretariat, on Sept. 23-24, 2021.

Prof. K. H. Mujtaba Quadri, Chair Research and Head of Nephrology, Maroof Clinical Investigation Center, Maroof International Hospital, Islamabad, stressed the need of training in conducting controlled trials and called for joint strategy. He has delivered keynote speech at the occasion. Prof. Quadri, talked about history, [→ ON PAGE 3](#)

## Kazakhstan Envoy Calls on Coordinator General, COMSTECH

H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, visited COMSTECH Secretariat on Thursday to discuss joint initiatives for science and technology, capacity building and higher education linkage. [→ ON PAGE 2](#)



## COMSTECH holds Webinar on Identifying and Validating New Drug Targets for NTDs

Professor Patrick G. Steel, Department of Chemistry and Biophysical Sciences Institute, Durham University, UK, delivered third lecture of COMSTECH-NTD Network joint lecture series on Monday, Sept. 27, 2021. COMSTECH, in collaboration with the global network for neglected tropical diseases — NTD Network — has launched a virtual [→ ON PAGE 2](#)



# COMSTech, SAWiE Join Hands to Combat Climate Change Affecting Farmers in OIC States

COMSTech has joined hand with SAWiE, to address the climate change crisis affecting livelihood of millions of smallholder farmers in OIC member states. To achieve this milestone, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between COMSTech and SAWiE was signed online.

Addressing to the MoU signing ceremony, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech, said, it is a matter of urgency to tackle climate change crisis. The entire OIC world including Pakistan are facing the dire water shortage. Pakistan is an agriculture economy with over 40% population employed in the agriculture sector. The agrarian sector contributes more than 20% in

the GDP, and it is dominated by smallholder farmers — 90% farmers with less than 12.5 acres.

Dr. Choudhary said that the collaboration with SAWiE will help develop sustainable agriculture solutions to achieve improved food quality by supporting smallholder farmers through knowledge-based farm advisory. He said, this collaboration will develop capacity in agriculture supply chains, addressing food security, and improving income of OIC member states.

Ms. Nosheen Ramzan, Chairperson SAWiE said “linking research with the agriculture industry not only benefits the economy but also addresses societal grand challenges of climate change, food security,

nutrition, healthy environment, and healthy planet”.

She said, new innovation contributes towards achieving sustainable agriculture solutions through net zero emissions. This collaboration will address food security & help smallholder farmers. She mentioned that this has a direct link with the achievement of United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs).



SAWiE uses open source earth observation data sets from European Space Agency and its community platform of farmer's network to help smallholder farmers to choose suitable time of sowing, irrigation application, pests and disease control measures and harvest planning to fetch better prices. COMSTech plans to work with SAWiE to popularize these applications in OIC region in different languages.

The partnership entails sharing knowledge, developing collaborative projects, and organizing capacity building events of stakeholders in OIC member states.♦

## COMSTech-IOFS Hold International Training on PGR Conservation and Safety

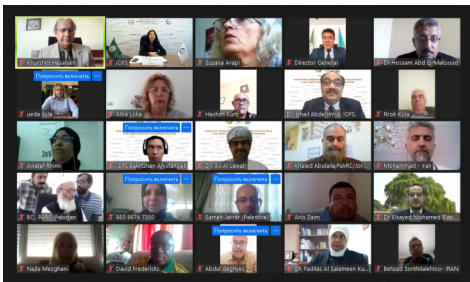
OIC Ministerial Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) and The Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), Kazakhstan, in partnership with the Bio-resources Conservation Institute (BCI) of Pakistan Agricultural Research Centre (PARC) conducted a 2-day international online training webinar on “Acquisition, Conservation, Exchange, and Safety Duplication of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) in OIC Member Countries – MENA Chapter” during September 21-22, 2021. MENA (Middle East North Africa) is one of the three recognized regions of the OIC.

PGR experts from 17 OIC member states delivered this training on the importance of conserving plant genetic resources, plant identification and herbarium, intellectual property rights and PGR, Genebank establishment, operation and information management, and plant genetic resource utilization. An overview of national gene banks of different OIC member states was also part of the training. Representatives of seven national Genebanks, the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) made technical presentations on different aspects of plant genetic resources preservation and exchange between member states of the OIC.

Mr. Yerlan A. Baidaulet, Director-General, IOFS, stressed the strong belief

and intention of his organization to build beneficial collaboration and networking among Genebanks in OIC member states, including the availability of accession and exchange.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTech thanked the Director-General of IOFS for joint implementation of activities, and expressed his willingness to continue the COMSTech-IOFS collaboration in the future. It is essential to note that both institutions commit all their resources and efforts to achieve best possible outcomes for the interest of OIC member countries. The two institutions, through a Memorandum of Understanding, had agreed to hold a series of training sessions on PGR conservation and safety for OIC member countries in 2021. This was the third training of the series, conducted for Middle East and North Africa region. First two trainings covered the Asian and African regions and were conducted in July and August 2021.♦



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## From Coordinator General's Desk

Saving biodiversity is equivalent to saving humanity as all live forms are integrally connected to each other for their survival and wellbeing. While we act to save the planet, it is important that we work on science and technological innovations for climate friendly agriculture, reducing consumption of natural resources in industrial production, development of new renewable energy resources, and most importantly for creating human

settlement with reduced footprint on environment. We need to create “climate resilient communities”, which is the theme of UNSECO World Science Day. There is now no room for climate skepticism now, science has proven without doubt the fast deteriorations in the ecology of planet Earth. We all need to act locally to achieve global targets, after all this is the only planet we have for us and for our future generations.♦

## Only Indigenous, Cohesive Policy Nurtures Innovation, experts

COMSTech organized a 2-day online training course on “Inclusive Science Technology and Innovation policy for OIC Member States”. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech delivered inaugural address and introduced the plenary speaker of the event, Prof. Dr. STK Naim.

He said Dr. Naim is a great source of inspiration. She is the best expert to talk about science and technology innovation policy. She has a long experience of working in this field, and has been contributing in STI policy making of different countries.

Prof. Choudhary said, every country should have its own STI policy based on its ground realities, strengths and weaknesses. A policy that has been tailored according to their own needs. One policy proven successful in one country cannot yield same results in the other country because of many other indigenous factors.

Dr. Naim gave talk on essential elements of innovation systems. She said, when the whole system works together, then innovation

starts happening. Each country need to develop understanding of innovation and train their people to innovate.

She said we can provide guidelines and take international instances for learning, that is all a policy adviser can do for a country. Policy making have to be indigenous, encompassing all stakeholders – policy makers, scientists, politicians, and private sector.

She said, private sector is a major player in innovation sector. We all know that innovation works in a cohesive and coherent system, and all STI policies are intertwined. All the players in innovation system work like an orchestra. The innovation system only works when all elements work together.

This two-day training delivered by national and international experts and more than 50 experts/ policy makers from different institutions of OIC member states participated in this training course online.♦



## COMSTech Organizes Webinar on Drug Discovery

COMSTech organized a webinar on “Advanced methods for structure determination of proteins and their complexes: drug discovery for motor neuron disease to COVID-19”, online.

Dr. Samar Hasnain, Molecular Biophysicist, delivered this webinar. He talked about advanced methods for determining structures of proteins and their complexes. He gave a comprehensive overview of protein structure determination, steps of producing recombinant protein and protein purification. Dr. Hasnain discussed crystallization of protein and its role in the drug discovery and development. He informed that one drug to treat COVID patients is under trial, and it will complete by summer 2022. He gave a comprehensive account of the history of crystallography, current developments and future prospects.

Dr. Christian Betzel, University of Hamburg, introduced the speaker to the audience, whereas Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech gave the background and talked on the importance of the webinar. A large number of audience — scientists, students, and researchers — from OIC member states attended the webinar.

Samar Hasnain, PhD in experimental Physics, from University of Manchester is a structural biologist with over 45 years of synchrotron radiation experience. He has pioneered an approach to define the structures of metalloproteins.♦



## Kazakhstan Envoy Calls on Coordinator General COMSTech

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Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech extended him very warm welcome. Both the dignitaries discussed the establishment of linkages between universities, reactivate OIC15 programme, and to launch proceedings of Al-Farabi Forum organized by COMSTech last year on the occasion of 1150th anniversary of Al-Farabi — renowned Muslim philosopher.

They discussed to establish the Al-Farabi chair in the universities of Pakistan and Iqbal chair in the universities of Kazakhstan. The Ambassador agreed to the suggestion of holding Iqbal Forum in Kazakhstan next year.

The Ambassador informed that the embassy of Kazakhstan will hold a live conference on the occasion of 30th anniversary of Pak-Kazakh relationship.

Mr. Kistafin appreciated COMSTech initiatives and assured full support for capacity building initiatives of COMSTech for OIC member states, as well bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.♦

## COMSTech holds Webinar on Identifying and Validating New Drug Targets for NTDs

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lecture series for researchers across the Muslim world, to build capacity to appropriately address Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTech introduced the speaker. He said, neglected tropical diseases are a major health and economic burden in OIC member states. The control and elimination of NTDs require both a scale-up and integration of global mass treatment programmes, along with new tools and technologies to tackle these diseases.

Professor Patrick G. Steel talked about the disease's genetic basis, current research work and future prospects to treat and control Leishmaniasis and Chagas disease. He also talked about the current techniques being used by the scientists in the field.

The NTD Network — funded by UKRI's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) — 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 therapeutic solutions for NTDs.

This webinar was attended by academics, scientists and the general public from OIC member states.♦



# COMSTECH and HSA Ink LoU to Build Public Health Capacity in OIC States

COMSTECH and Health Services Academy (HSA) signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) to collaborate in the areas of: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and exchange of information with the focus to achieve shared aims and objectives, here at COMSTECH Secretariat on Thursday.

It was agreed upon to conduct online, and in-person trainings in African regions in basic health sciences, and policy making by sending prominent experts in a particular field to the region to train people not only from the host country but also from the neighbouring countries as well. Both the institutions resolved to

carry out extensive capacity building programs public health in African regions.

It was agreed to develop joint research programmes; invite scholars for lectures, talks and participation in conferences, colloquia and symposia; organize workshops, exchange information and publications; and facilitate faculty and staff visits to the partner institutions of OIC member states.

COMSTECH would invite the Health Services Academy (HSA), Pakistan, as a member of

COMSTECH Consortium of excellence for the development and promotion of public health

activities in OIC member states. Distinguished teachers, professors, researchers of HSA would work as resource persons for capacity building in public health of OIC member states.

HSA in collaboration with COMSTECH would submit a project proposal of the establishment of the OIC. The President of Infectious Diseases Center in Gambia under Resource Bank. The Health Services Academy, is a degree awarding institute, under

the umbrella of Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination, Government of Pakistan. HSA offers long term, short term teaching training and research programs in public health.

The COMSTECH is the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC. The President of Pakistan is the Chairman of COMSTECH. COMSTECH works for the socio-economic development of OIC member states through capacity building in frontier fields of science and technology, and strengthening cooperation. ♦



Left to right: Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, Vice Chancellor, HSA, and Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH

## COMSTECH – ICCBS International Exhibition on “Technology Enabled Healthcare Solutions”

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah inaugurated the 2-day COMSTECH – ICCBS International Exhibition on “Technology Enabled Healthcare Solutions” at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, held in the Prof. Salimuzzaman Siddiqui Auditorium of the ICCBS, the chief minister said that Sindh Government had used science and technology at every stage of



Karachi, Chairman Husein Ebrahim Jamal Foundation Mr. Aziz Latif Jamal, Chairperson Dr. Panjwani Memorial Trust Ms. Nadira Panjwani, and Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Director of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, and

said, adding that this center has played an extremely important role in provisional capacity in healthcare research, and community service delivery.

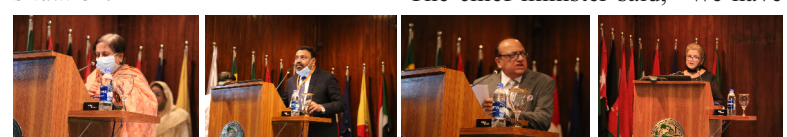
He said that this center had also setup the National Institute of Virology in 2018 which was serving as the premier testing facility of province of Sindh with overall 0.3 million PCR tests conducted so far. It is also the place where SARS-CoV-2 genomic surveillance and variant detection is pursued on regular basis, he said.

He said that the Sindh govt has already committed substantial amount of money for sustaining and upgrading this premier research institution, which included several development projects as well. He said, “I consider such exhibitions of prime importance as they provide opportunities for young inventors and innovators to present their ideas and products, and receive encouragement and support from industries.” ♦



handling the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

COMSTECH Coordinator General. The chief minister said, “We have



The inaugural ceremony also addressed by Sindh Health and Population Welfare Minister, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman, Chairman of Prime Minister's Task Force on Science and Technology and ICCBS Patron-in-chief, Prof. Dr. Khalid M. Iraqi, Vice Chancellor University of

incorporated scientists and healthcare professionals in our decision making process. During the ongoing pandemic, our government has taken some important decisions, and faced criticism.”

The ICCBS is a unique example of private sector contribution and vision towards higher education, he

### Capacity Building for Clinical Trials Crucial, experts

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and legacy of clinical trials initiation and gave a comprehensive guidelines of the current course.

Dr. Abdur Rasheed, Director, Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, informed about the current clinical trials being conducted in Pakistan and stressed the need of capacity building through training of researchers in conducting clinical trials. Dr. Ghazna Khalid, Member Prime Minister's Task Force for COVID19, said that we have potential of conducting clinical

trials, and we should train our researchers to perform quality trials. Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, Vice-Chancellor, HSA, chaired the inaugural session. He said that HSA and COMSTECH has joined hands to carry out joint projects for capacity building in public health sector as well as health care research. He appreciated the idea of Prof. Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH.

Coordinator General, COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary welcomed the participants and

appreciated the contribution of key institutions involved in clinical trials. Prof. Choudhary, stressed the need of training in conducting world-class clinical trials and termed it immensely important as first step towards drug security.

He guided the researchers to prove our immense treasure of traditional medicine through clinical trials and develop modern drugs from them for not only indigenous use but also for export to the other nations. ♦

## COMSTECH Constitutes Committee to Hold Iqbal Forum in Kazakhstan

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Department of Persian, Government College University, Lahore; Prof. Dr. Baseera Ambreen, Director, Allama Iqbal Academy, Lahore; Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Fareed, Director, Center for Iqbal Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore; Prof. Dr.

Muhammad Rafiq-ul-Islam, Head of the Department Iqbal Studies, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur; and Mr. Muhammad Murtaza Noor, National Coordinator, Inter-University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences, IUCPSS, whereas Prof. Dr.

Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore, is the convener of the committee.

COMSTECH organized Al-Farabi Forum in 2020 in Islamabad in collaboration with Turkic Academy and the government of Kazakhstan. ♦

## INOC Organizes 2nd International Event on Latest Developments in Marine Sciences

Inter-Islamic Network on Oceanography (INOC) organized second international event on the Latest Developments on Marine Sciences-II on 26 October 2021. Six distinguished speakers from Indonesia Iran, Malaysia, Turkey and Iraq shared their latest research experiences on Plastic and Microplastic pollution, the Bloom of Salps, Operational Oceanography, Climate Change and Social-Ecological System for Marine Sciences.

More than hundred participants from Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, USA, Australia attended the event.

President of INOC, Prof. Dr. Sermin ACIK CINAR opened the event and Secretary INOC Prof. Dr. Bulent CAVAS and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ong Men CHUAN moderated the event. At the end of event, INOC invited all participants from Islamic Countries to collaborate with INOC and INOC Network Institutions to support Marine Sciences using scientific and technological potential of INOC. Dr. ACIK CINAR and Dr. CAVAS suggested all participants to keep visiting INOC ([www.inoctr.org](http://www.inoctr.org)) and COMSTECH ([www.comstech.org](http://www.comstech.org)) official web pages for further information. ♦

## INOC Organizes Virtual Seminar on “Advanced Technologies for Marine Sciences”

INOC organized an online seminar on the “Advanced Technologies for Marine Sciences” on 1 October 2021. The seminar was given by Dr. Bertan Tezcan from Hoytek Engineering-Turkey and moderated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harun Özdaş from Dokuz Eylul University, Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology.

The event was opened by INOC Secretary, Prof. Dr. Bulent CAVAS, informing participants about INOC

and COMSTECH activities. Dr. Tezcan gave about 1 hour 30 minutes talk about the underwater technologies developed by Hoytek Engineering for Marine Science Researches. INOC President, Prof. Dr. Sermin ACIK CINAR mentioned that this kind of training activities will be organized in coming months. For more News on the INOC, please visit [www.inoctr.org](http://www.inoctr.org) ♦

## President Alvi Urges OIC States to Nurture Virtual Hybrid Cooperation

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the health status of the crop. This app also guides farmers in choosing quality inputs, seed & fertilizer, irrigation, crop protection solutions, and their timely application.

The inaugural session was attended by nine ambassadors of OIC member states along with agriculture scientists and farmers. In the technical session, speakers from UAE, UK, USA and Pakistan participated. ♦

## Prof. M. Iqbal Choudhary Honoured with Top Muslim World Science Award - The Mustafa Prize

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Dr. Iqbal is D.Sc., Ph.D., and C. Chem. He has been awarded by different governments of Pakistan with Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz.

He has been elected fellow by world renowned science academies named Academy of Sciences for the Developing World, Islamic World academy of Sciences, Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Royal Society of Chemistry, and Chemical Society of Pakistan.

Prof. Iqbal has been honored by the President of Iran with Khwarizmi International Award, President of Azerbaijan, with ECO Award in Education and the Prime Minister of Pakistan with COMSTECH Award in Chemistry.

He has been given the prestigious title of “Distinguished National Professor” by the Higher Education Commission in 2004 and Meritorious Professor by the University of Karachi in 2013. ♦



# News from OIC Member States

## ITFC LAUNCHES SECOND PHASE OF AFTIAS 2.0 PROGRAM WORTH \$15.5 MILLION

Jeddah (UNA-OIC) – The International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) launched on Wednesday the second phase of the Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States (AFTIAS 2.0) Program at the headquarters of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The main objective of AFTIAS 2.0, whose implementation will span over five years, is to improve

international trade environment in the Arab region and make it more



efficient and inclusive, create job opportunities, and contribute to sustainable development in the region.

The Program also aims to facilitate access to foreign markets, remove restrictions on the supply of goods and services, and enhance trade inclusion of women, youth and disadvantaged groups, who have recently suffered the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. ♦

## Malaysia Seeks to Turn into A High-Technology Country by 2030



Kuala Lumpur (UNA-OIC) – The Ministry of Science, Technology

and Innovation (MOSTI) is optimistic about implementing and ensuring the success of the policies and initiatives outlined to turn Malaysia into a high-technology

country by 2030, the Malaysian Minister of Science Technology and Innovation said.

Dr. Adham Baba said MOSTI welcomed the announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob at the opening of Invest Malaysia 2021 recently on making Malaysia a high-technology country by 2030, targeting the creation of an

ecosystem in the economy that is driven by science, technology and innovation.

“This will facilitate local technology development by creating economic opportunities and talents or workforce in artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and blockchain technology. ♦

## Kazakh scientists developing remedy for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease

Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan (UNA-OIC) – Scientists from Kazakhstan's Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda State University (KKSU) are working on medicine to treat Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease.

They have won the EU grant and joined the team of developers comprising scientists from Portugal, the Netherlands, Denmark, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, the Kazakh Education and Science Ministry's press service reports.

Camel thorn trees growing in the southern regions of Kazakhstan are

used for drug manufacturing. The Kazakh scientists extracted biologically active substances from camel thorn trees which are effective at the early stages of atherosclerosis.

The Kazakh scientists' discovery



was presented in Portugal and stirred interest. The foreign experts conducted an express test and confirmed that nanomaterials discovered by the Kazakh scientists hinder the development of Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease and will help to treat them at early stages. Besides, the biologically active substances in camel thorn plants have no side effects and are the safest for consumption.

Kyzylorda scientists jointly with foreign colleagues applied for the contest and won the grant of the EU Horizon 2020 program. The team plans pre-clinical and clinical trials. ♦

## IsDB Signs \$50m Financing Agreement for Benin Community Health Project

Tashkent (UNA-OIC) – The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Government of Benin have signed a \$50 million financing agreement for “Closing Gaps: Community Health, Human Resources, and Nutrition” project, a new development project in the West African country.

The agreement was signed IsDB President Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser and Benin's Minister of Economy and Finance Romuald Wadagni, on the sidelines of the 2021 IsDB Group Annual Meetings being held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on September 1-4.

The project which is funded with concessional financing from IsDB's Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF) with the support of the Bank's donor partners, aims to address the critical



and urgent gaps in primary healthcare and nutrition services in Benin, particularly with regard to maternal and child healthcare.

On the occasion, Al Jasser said: “This is an important project for the long-term, sustainable socio-economic prosperity of Benin. Through this Lives and Livelihoods Fund investment, we are helping to create lasting positive change in the country's health sector to help people live longer and happier lives and set the foundation for the next

generation to thrive and reach their full potentials.”

The objectives of the project are to improve access to primary healthcare and nutrition services and to strengthen the surveillance and prevention of epidemics and infectious diseases in communities. By the end of the current five-year timeline for the completion of the project, 400 medical doctors, 400 nurses and midwives, and 600 health assistants are expected to be recruited, trained and deployed in rural areas to provide health and nutrition services to communities. Also, over 4,000 community health workers are expected to be recruited and deployed to provide home-based health and nutrition services. ♦

## OIC Secretary-General Addresses Middle East Green Initiative Summit



Jeddah (UNA-OIC) – Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen commended the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit and the inaugural Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) Forum, both unveiled by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Defense.

The SGI aims to contribute to the effort of reversing the effects of the climate change across the Middle East, such as through increasing vegetation cover, reducing carbon emissions, combatting pollution and land degradation, and promoting wildlife conservation, Al-Othaimeen underlined. ♦

## Saudi Arabia Donates SAR 20 million to Provide Vaccines for OIC-LDCs

Jeddah (UNA-OIC) – Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit and the host country of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), donated SAR20 million to support OIC's initiative to provide COVID-19 vaccines for health workers and the elderly in the OIC least-developed countries (OIC-LDCs).

This generous donation, which was made in coordination with King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), will benefit 22 OIC-LDCs including Palestine, the OIC General Secretariat announced here a press conference on Monday.

The press conference was held in the attendance of OIC Secretary-General Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the OIC Dr. Saleh bin Hamad Al-Suhaibani, and Director of KSrelief Branch in Jeddah Dr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Zahrani.

Al-Othaimeen stressed that this initiative is part of the OIC's continuous efforts to enhance Islamic solidarity, support causes of the Islamic world and develop the Islamic joint action in all fields among member states and with the rest of the world.

The General Secretariat appreciates this Saudi generous support, which is considered the first response to the OIC's call to provide vaccines for the least developed countries, he said.

Al-Othaimeen also expressed thanks and gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman, Head of the Islamic Summit, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for their quick response to support the OIC's initiative.

The General-Secretary further thanked member states that offered COVID-19 vaccines, under bilateral cooperation, to the OIC's neediest countries. ♦

## Indonesia Among Top 10 Countries with Highest Vaccination Rates

Jakarta (UNA-OIC) – Indonesia is listed among the top 10 countries for having the highest COVID-19 vaccination rates in the world, according to Government's spokesperson and Ambassador for the Adaptation of New Habits Reisa Broto Asmoro. Indonesia had achieved the target of administering the first dose to 40 percent of the population and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to 22.73-percent of the populace

out of the targeted 208,265,720 vaccinations in the country, Asmoro noted in an online press statement at the Presidential Office on Friday.

"Praise be to God, Indonesia has exceeded the 10-percent target and has also reached the benchmark, or 40-percent target of injecting the first dose this week," she added.

Asmoro believes that the achievement is a result of the government's continued efforts to provide and distribute vaccine stocks.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has set a vaccination target of 10 percent of the population in each country by September 2021, 40 percent of the population in each country by the end of 2021, and 70 percent of the world's population by mid-2022. ♦



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