COMSTECH Fellowships for Research and Advanced Training in Virology and Vaccine Technologies

COMSTECH offers fellowships to young scientists in OIC countries to enable them to spend 3 months at a relevant centre of excellence in an OIC member state, other than their own. The purpose of these fellowships is to enhance the research and development capacity of promising scientists, especially those at the beginning of their research career, helping them to foster linkages for further collaboration in the field of virology and vaccine technology. For further details and application submission please browse http://www.comstech.org/comstech-fellowships.aspx.

COMSTECH Program for Technical Training

COMSTECH offers internship to technical personnel in developing OIC countries to enable them to spend 4-6 weeks at a centre of excellence/university in OIC member state, and learn the operations, trouble shooting and related details of state-of-the-art instrumentations. The purpose of these fellowships is to strengthen the capacity of technical manpower in the effective and optimal use of expensive and sophisticated research equipments. For further details and application submission please visit http://www.comstech.org/technical-personnels.aspx.

COMSTECH in Collaboration with UoL Offers Research Fellowships

COMSTECH in collaboration with the University of Lahore announces 10 research fellowships, 15 trainings and Indus-Nile forum for academic management training workshops for OIC least developed member states in Asia and Africa.

These scholarships are offered in health and education sectors. The avenues of collaborative efforts between the two institutions have been explored to benefit from mutual collaboration.

This was decided in a meeting held at COMSTECH between Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Mr. Awais Raoof, Chairman, BoG, The University of Lahore and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Uganda. Mr. Murtaza Noor, National Coordinator IUCPSS Pakistan, also attended the meeting.
1st COMSTECH Showcasing of Artificial Intelligence and IoT Products and Services: AI and IoT for Pakistan

COMSTECH with partner organizations, including Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications of Pakistan and Center for Advanced Research in Engineering (CARE) organized “1st COMSTECH Showcasing of Artificial Intelligence and IoT Products and Services: AI and IoT for Pakistan” on 4th and 5th August 2020.

The President of Pakistan, H. E. Dr. Arif Alvi, inaugurated the exhibition on August 4, 2020. He appreciated COMSTECH for taking a pioneering step to initiate a series of exhibitions on modern technologies, and close collaboration with partner institutions in OIC countries to hold such events and mentioned that under the new leadership of Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, COMSTECH has initiated a large number of capacity building activities and programs using its strong networking in 57 OIC member states.

He highlighted the need of AI and its application while stressing for innovation creation and marketing of the products.

The President congratulated COMSTECH and its partner institutions on taking this important initiative. Such showcasing not only encourages a culture of innovation, but serves as a platform for interfacing between business and research institutions, he added.

The President urged to produce software developers, empower women, and use software extensively. He stressed the need of motivating and growing the human resources and mentioned that there are tremendous opportunities in OIC member states to get benefit from the latest technologies.

He stressed that the dream of a smart future for our nation cannot be fulfilled without much more vigorous efforts of the business community and greater synergy between the private sector, government, and academic institutions. The president wished a very successful exhibition, and a very bright future for COMSTECH in these exciting ventures.

The minister for Science and Technology of Pakistan mentioned that the Ministry of S&T strongly believes that scientific and technological developments in our country must be translated into products and services. The Ministry continues to support research institutions, assured the minister. He mentioned that COMSTECH is the most important international organization Pakistan hosts.

He informed that the Ministry of S&T greatly values the central role that COMSTECH is playing not only in the capacity building of OIC countries but also its pivotal role in presenting the Pakistan’s scientific and technological capabilities for the promotion of export of high technology products. We are closely working with the COMSTECH for the success of a large number of initiatives, which have been launched under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, he said.

Coordinator General COMSTECH briefed the President about new COMSTECH initiatives for promotion of science and technology in OIC member states. He mentioned that COMSTECH programmes focus to develop skills and capacity of youth of the OIC region in modern technologies. He also mentioned that COMSTECH is projecting Pakistan’s image as scientifically leading country through inter- and intra-Islamic initiatives.

In his welcome address, Mr. M. Aamir, Project Director, CARE, said that the impact of AI alone on the global GDP is expected to be 15.7 trillion USD. Countries around the globe are strategizing to take maximum benefit from these technologies. If Pakistan captures even a miniscule percentage like 1% of this market, it values 157 billion USD something like 25 trillion Pak Rupees.

Twenty-six exhibitors from industry, academia, research centers and strategic organizations from all over Pakistan participated in this exhibition and showcased their products and services in areas of Health, Internet of Things, Virtual Assistants & Chatbots, Big Data & Data Analytics, Cyber Security, Digital Transformation – 5G, Virtual Augmented Reality, Block Chain, and Business Intelligence. A large number of students and researchers visited this two-day exhibition.

Addressing the closing ceremony Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary congratulated the partner organizations for holding this event successfully. He assured that COMSTECH would organize such events in advanced cutting-edge technologies throughout OIC member states.
Certificate Course on Diagnosis of COVID-19 Concludes

3-day Online Certificate Course on Diagnosis of COVID-19: Sample Collection, RNA Extraction, PCR, and Data Interpretation concluded successfully on August 20.

More than three hundred participants joined the inaugural session from 30 countries. A very large number of researchers, four hundred, got registered to this course.

Coordinator General, COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary thanked the organizing team and Institute of Virology for holding this successful capacity building event which was attended by more than 300 people from different countries and termed this event a good example of international cooperation.

He appreciated the topic selection and the module design of the training course by the organizing team and stressed that the learning technical details of PCR, RNA, DNA is most important not only for COVID-19 but also for other health related tests, because there exists so many pitfalls that may take to absolutely wrong results.

He urged the participants to always keep learning because this is the only way to deal with the future challenges and help save the humanity.

Pakistan Must Establish Cybercity to Capture Fourth Industrial Revolution

We need electricity and internet to reshape our country. Pakistan must establish a cybercity to generate, use, disseminate and share knowledge of networking, internet, internet of things and fourth industrial revolution, said Dr. Kashif Nisar while addressing an online seminar organized by COMSTECH, LEJ and University of Karachi.

Dr. Nisar talked about the fourth industrial revolution and IoT, smart home technologies, IoT and banking, IR 4.0 in agriculture and tourism, future internet and information-centric networking (ICN).

The fourth industrial revolution is coming with the application of internet of things to industry combined with other technologies like big data, machine learning and 3D printing, he informed by mentioning that the 4th industrial revolution leading the intelligent information society and the digital transformation.

Wearable devices, building and home automation, smart cities, smart manufacturing, smart health care and smart automation are the topics of research and application of tomorrow, he mentioned by quoting examples of application of such technologies from advanced countries.

He gave a snapshot of the future world by mentioning that 10% people will be wearing clothes and reading glasses connected to internet, 1 trillion sensors will be connected to the internet, 1st robotic pharmacist in US, 1st 3D printed car production, 10% driverless cars on US roads and 90% population will be with smart phones by 2025.

Dr. Nisar pointed out that key success factors in the 4th industrial revolution era are technology, industry and society that must be fully equipped with the modern information technologies.

Internet has changed the world and made profound changes in human history. If we compare the world of pre and post internet, this is the internet that has changed our way of living altogether. There is not any other technology that has been taken and deployed so rapidly then the Internet. International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi is the first one which started using Internet and Email in 1980s, mentioned Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH in his introductory remarks.

Dr. Kashif Nisar got post doctorate from Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. He did his PhD from University of Technology Malaysia. His field of study is information technology and networks. Currently he is serving as associate professor at the faculty of computing and informatics Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Sabah, Malaysia

Complete video of this lecture is available on comstech-oic youtube channel.
Pakistan Remarkable Example of Best Response to COVID-19

Most Muslim majority countries have avoided the large scale catastrophic outbreak. Pakistan is a remarkable example of data driven, coordinated and focused response probably the best in low and middle income countries, said Dr. Zulfiqar Bhutta while addressing COMSTECH online webinar on response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 is an existential threat to the world. Twenty and half million cases and close to 750 thousand deaths have been reported worldwide and this figure will be one million before the end of this year, he predicted. This pandemic has affected every geography even places where we have very little data from. In Pakistan public sector spent over 20 million dollars on testing alone between March and now, he mentioned.

Dr. Bhutta pointed out that Muslim community have unique attributes and some protective factors as well. Geographic and geo-political clustering does protect and sometimes expose them but there are common socio-cultural practices like Ablution for prayers do have standard sanitation and hygiene. Dietary restrictions have some level of dietary protection against consumption of agents which might be risk for infectious diseases, he mentioned.

He also highlighted the risk factors like communal practices and behaviors, religious celebrations and gatherings that were major factors in the initial spread of the virus because protective strategies had not been implemented. In the Islamic world, areas of conflict and insecurity, vaccine hesitancy and gender norms and practices are major risks of health related concerns.

Authoritarian regimes responded better than the democratic societies. Many countries in Europe, not only UK and US have really not done as well, as one would image as others have done in the world, he noted.

Pakistan is much better than others in the region. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh seem to have flatten the curve in terms of cases and case fatalities. We are indeed beginning to see reduction in local transmission. Overall case positivity rate is around 4%.

Successful Science Diplomacy Requires Coordinated Effort

Speakers of a webinar on science diplomacy during COVID-19 agreed that a coordinated effort of diplomats, experts, research institutions, universities, consortiums and social and material scientists is the need of the hour to foster science diplomacy. The webinar was jointly organized by COMSTECH, Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies and Inter University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences Humanities and Arts.

Coordinator General, COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Chaudhary in his welcoming remarks said that never in the history of humanity such crisis emerged like COVID-19. He said that we have seen the failure of the international diplomacy and science diplomacy during this pandemic period. LDCs were left alone to handle a health, social and economic crisis of unparalleled magnitude. He mentioned that the post-COVID-19 period will be a pre-pandemic period and after conducting analysis of previous pandemics he predicted that the next pandemic would be in six years of time. Never in the history of humanity science and technology was so promptly deployed to face a global pandemic, he appreciated.

High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh, Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, said that political and diplomatic interests are very closely linked to S&T and there is a need for comprehensive strategy for science diplomacy. He stressed that the economic growth is all about productivity and it is not possible without focusing on science and technological development. He indicated that involving private sector is most important for economic growth.

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Science Communication Scientists’ Obligation

Science communication is a neglected area in the developing world and we should look at it as a mainstream profession and discipline just like we look at microbiology, physics, chemistry, and engineering, said Dr. Mahalethumy Arujanan, while addressing an online webinar on science communication.

She said that Covid-19 taught us a lot of lessons one of which is lack of science literacy among not only in general public but also in policy makers and politicians which was reflected from their statements that did not stand with science.

While talking about the importance of science and technology she asked, is there any country in the world that has developed without strong pillars of science, technology and innovation? She said that the science and technology is the driver of economic development and the general public, politicians, and policy makers need to have a strong science literacy and defined that science literacy means basic knowledge of science to make decisions.

She stressed the development of science culture, so that people like to visit science theater, science museums and science café in their free time and discuss science on dining table. She stressed the need of making science part of culture for a good science communication.

She mentioned that without public acceptance science cannot be commercialized. She stressed the need of science acceptance by the societies by mentioning that nothing can be accepted blindly, the science has to be tested, proven, and validated for acceptance and once it is tested, proven, and validated, public should be open minded and must be able to evaluate the information and accept it. Science is for everyone, and citizens should participate in science decisions, she urged.

She indicated that the policies, regulations and guidelines which are not based on science can be dangerous and suggested that policies, regulations and funding mechanisms should be based on science.

She urged scientists to become science communicators. There are benefits of science communication. Scientists can influence regulations, raise funding, garner attention, and initiate collaboration with industry by just communicating their research in simple words. Institutional support, political support, commercialization, and public acceptance can only be achieved by science communication, she informed.

She described the fundamental techniques and strategies of science communication in her webinar for science communicators and who are aspirant to be.

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Successful Science Diplomacy Requires Coordinated Effort

Vice Chancellor of QAU, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah pointed out that organizations like COMSTECH, Diplomats, Universities and Research Organizations can combine together and foster science diplomacy. He said that policies are made by policy experts, and implemented by institutions, universities and civil society. He has informed that as partner University with COMSTECH. We are trying to develop a consortium of 20 universities from OIC member states to look at COVID-19 and many more interests, like economic, health, earth sciences and many other areas of interest. He stressed the use of online platform for education, interaction and discussions.

Mr. Kamran Akhtar Malik, DG, ACDIS, MoFA, Pakistan said that the role of science in diplomacy is not new. Diplomacy has been used to facilitate S&T. Covid-19 reinforced the significance of science diplomacy. He pointed out that science diplomacy is not limited to health, science diplomacy encompasses entire spectrum of S&T areas. He highlighted many diplomatic efforts taken during this pandemic. He recommended adopting multidisciplinary approach for science diplomacy and involving multiple facilitating agencies in the process. He further mentioned that COMSTECH, MoST and Universities conduct proper mapping and foresight activities for diplomats.

Farhat Asif, Founder President, Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, moderated the entire session and explained the aim and reasons behind hosting the Webinar to promote emerging forms of diplomacy and building coalitions amongst the scientists and diplomats in order to boost cooperation to further promote the quick and effective response to the rising national, regional and global challenges and pandemics.

The Webinar was livestreamed and attended by larger number of Diplomats, Ambassadors, Students, Faculty Members and member of civil society with keen interest in Science Diplomacy.

Video of this webinar is available on comstech-oic youtube channel.
From Coordinator General’s Desk

of using science and technology for human well-being is striving to bridge this gap, and to reconnect nations, and international organizations for global common good.

In this pursuit, COMSTECH is working closely with OIC-WHO working group on healthcare, UNESCO science and technology office (Jakarta), European Union, TWAS, IFS, etc., along with many sister organizations in OIC member states. COMSTECH welcomes every suggestion which strengthens S&T cooperation between countries for a better future of humanity, and other fellow living beings.

Webinar on Hepatitis B and C: “Discovery to Elimination 2030”

On the Occasion of World Hepatitis Day, COMSTECH arranged web based seminar to discuss diagnosis and prophylaxis of Hepatitis B & C.

Dr. Wasim talked about targets for the elimination of Hepatitis B & C by 2030. He highlighted the discovery of both HBV and HCV and the prospects of global elimination as per WHO’s vision of 2030 elimination target. This webinar was attended by a large number of health experts, physicians, academicians, scientists, public health officials and general public from OIC member states.

Prof. Dr. Wasim Jafri, is Professor of Medicine, Consultant, Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist, Director World Gastroenterology Training Centre, Aga Khan University and Director centre of Digestive and Liver diseases South City Hospital Karachi Pakistan conducted this seminar.

This webinar is available on comstech-oic youtube channel.

Science Communication Scientists’ Obligation

At the end of her talk she quoted famous physicist, Richard Feynman “The ultimate test of your knowledge is your capacity to convey it to another”.

Prof. Dr. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH, introduced the speaker and the topic to the audience and said that the lack of science communication has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed the need of science communication.

This webinar was organized by COMSTECH, more than 75 researchers attended it online. Dr. Mahaletchumy Arujanan, Executive Director, Malaysian Biotechnology Information Centre, and Global Coordinator, International Service for the Acquisition of Agribiotech Applications delivered this webinar.

Video of this webinar is available on comstech-oic youtube channel.