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COMSTech News

September-2008

ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CO-OPERATION

From Coordinator General's Desk



Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman, FRS
N.I., H.I., S.I., T.I.

The key to progress in this day and age is education. Countries which have been able to transition the knowledge economy have done so on the basis of quality education and training in key fields essential for development.

The foundations of high quality education systems are laid at the school level. However there is a serious mismatch between the capabilities of school graduates and the need for highly advanced skills by the industry in most OIC member countries. Vocational training institutes of world standard need to be established by the upgradation of existing institutions and by providing top class faculty and appropriate laboratories. There is also a need for promoting a culture of continuous and life-long learning so that the skills can be constantly improved and upgraded.

A special program for improving science education in secondary and higher secondary schools needs to be introduced so that students can learn physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry, computer science etc. This would involve not only improving the curricula but also

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ISNET to hold Seminar on Space Technology and Applications for Sustainable Development

COMSTech Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology (ISNET), in collaboration with North African Centre for Remote Sensing (CRTEAN) and Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), is arranging an international seminar on the topic, "Space Technology and Applications for Sustainable Development" from 24-27 November, 2008 in Tunisia. Attendance is open to all pertinent scientists, professionals and decision makers from OIC member states.

Inter - Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology (ISNET) is inter-state, non political and not-for-profit agency.

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Meeting for Approval of EMRO - COMSTech Grant being held in Egypt

Meeting of the Final Selection Committee for award of EMRO-COMSTech Grant 2008-2009 is being held at Cairo in Egypt. COMSTech is being represented by Dr. Anwar Nasim, Advisor (Science).

In response to the call for research proposals in the field of biotechnology and genomics in health, 65 research proposals were received from the member states. Through a process of in-house screening, 48 proposals have been short-listed for review before the Final Selection Committee for approval of funding.

Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) of the World Health Organisation and Organisation of Islamic Conference Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) jointly launched this program upon realization of the weak state of health research in the Eastern Mediterranean Region which makes up of almost 21 OIC member states. COMSTech is extending its share of funding for this project in order to strengthen health research in those member states.

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Member States' Science Experts to Join COMSTECH

Prominent Science and technology experts from the Islamic World are poised to join Organization of the Islamic Conference Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).

In this regards, COMSTECH is inviting these eminent Muslim scientists and technologists. They will work at COMTECH Headquarters located in Islamabad, Pakistan on various areas of interests to its member states.

COMSTECH areas of interest, at present, include science and technology policy, promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship, studies on biotechnology, bio-saline

agriculture, nanotechnology and few other fields which are important for the development of the OIC region.

Addition of these experts will broaden science and technology advisory capacity of COMSTECH for the betterment of entire Ummah. COMSTECH has already established a Science, Technology & Innovation Policy Research Center and a Bio-informatics Center for the member states in its secretariat building. ■

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ISNET to hold Seminar on Space Technology and Applications for Sustainable Development

It is an independent, autonomous and self governing institution under the umbrella of the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH). Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) is the host organization of ISNET.

COMSTECH established six inter-Islamic networks to promote specific areas of research in the member states. ISNET is one of those, established to accelerate research and development in space sciences in the member states.

The decision to establish these Networks was taken at the Third Meeting of the OIC COMSTECH, held at Islamabad during November 19-22, 1986 under the Chairmanship of President of Pakistan and endorsed by the Fifth Islamic Summit held in Kuwait from January 26-29, 1987.

Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) hosted the founding meeting of Inter-Islamic Networks on Space Sciences and Technology (ISNET) from September 30 to October 01, 1987, at Karachi.

Pakistan (Chairman SUPARCO) was unanimously elected the President of the Network.

Few of the main objectives for establishing ISNET are: To collaborate and cooperate with OIC member states in the peaceful uses of outer space, to exchange information, share experiences and maintain dialogue on the developments in space science, space technology and their applications among OIC member states, to create and maintain a data bank of expertise in the field of space science, space technology and their application among the OIC member states.

To initiate joint projects of space sciences and technology among the OIC member states is also its main objective. It also conducts training courses for capacity building and human resource development. The current seminar is part of the same objective.

COMSTECH is regularly extending financial assistance to ISNET for its program and activities. For further details about the seminar, please visit ISNET's website www.isnet.org.pk or email at info@isnet.org.pk ■

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From Coordinator General's Desk

ensuring access to quality teachers and teaching tools. All science students in high school and secondary schools should study mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology whereas students in other subjects should also be required to study mathematics along with one other science subject.

However this cannot be achieved without having high quality science teachers with requisite qualifications. The shortage of science teachers can be addressed by introducing a system of contract appointments for unemployed graduates after providing them some additional training.

In order to introduce quality and accountability in the education systems it is necessary to benchmark all the educational institutes. A regular audit in terms of quality of students produced by schools/colleges judged by internationally known criteria can introduce competition and quality in the education systems.

To ensure that academic and research institutions reach 'world-standards', and carry out international quality research, academic audits should be implemented and the outcome should be matched by funding. Such assessments are now common place in all scientifically leading nations. ■



13,594 Researchers Benefited from COMSTech Scientific Literature Search Service

The COMSTech Literature Search Service has, by September 26, 2008, processed requests from 13,594 researchers of the member states and transferred 27.462 GB of abstracts/references to them. The data transferred makes 13.709 million pages as text file.

Keeping in view the difficulties of the OIC research community, COMSTech initiated, a decade back, free scientific literature search service with an electronic database covering about 6000 journals. At present the service covers Agricultural Sciences, Biology and Environmental Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical, Chemical

& Earth Sciences, Engineering and Computing Technology. The procedure has been constantly refined and it now meets requests received at the COMSTech normally within one working day. COMSTech has direct access to the databases in the United States of America and most current search results are provided to the researchers.

The procedure is very simple; researchers send an email to COMSTech and get required literature within 24 hours. All expenses are borne by COMSTech and the required information is provided to them free of cost.

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Meeting for Approval of EMRO - COMSTech Grant being held in Egypt

The overall aim of the grant is to promote research, encourage networking, generate new knowledge, and stimulate the application of biotechnology and genomic driven interventions in health care. It is expected that the priority research areas identified for the grant will stimulate and sustain multidisciplinary applied research to exploit the full potential of genome information.

In order to underpin applications to human health, emphasis is placed on research aimed at bringing basic knowledge to the application stage for improving the quality of health care in the region under focus.

Priority areas for the COMSTech-EMRO grant within the main spectrum of biotechnology and genomics are: molecular diagnosis of infectious, communicable and genetic diseases and development of recombinant technologies to produce therapeutic products for combating major diseases, development of new, safer, more effective drugs including pharmacogenomics approaches, development of recombinant vaccines, bioethical research and intellectual property rights in biotechnology and genomics. ■

INOC to Hold Seminar in Iran on Marine Pollution

The Inter-Islamic Network on Oceanography (INOC) is going to hold an international seminar in Iran on Marine Pollution in December, 2008. It will be a joint activity by COMSTech and ISESCO.

The planned seminar aims to provide the necessary mechanism and means for exchange and sharing of information, data, ideas, experience and know-how enabling the formulation of a unified strategy by the stakeholders to check marine pollution.

INOC was established by COMSTech in November 1987 and started functioning in April 1989. It is based in Izmir, hosted by the Republic of Turkey. INOC mission is to foster closer cooperation among the OIC member states for development and management of marine resources.

The majority of member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) are maritime states bordering the Atlantic coast of North-West Africa, the South coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, North Arabian sea including the Gulf and parts of South East Asia. They are spread over in all the three major oceans.

Under the United Nations convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS -1982, the marine jurisdiction of these nations have been extended to about 10 million square kilometers Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) over which these countries have sovereign rights. Most of these oceanic areas represent some of the most productive regions of the world oceans, characterized by such oceanic phenomena which are favourable for producing rich fisheries, mineral, oil and gas resources.

Economical exploitation of ocean space and its resources is beset with numerous scientific and technological problems in the majority of these countries. Therefore these countries need "Advanced Marine Sciences and Technologies" for the maximum utilization of marine affairs, protection of marine environment and balancing the multiple uses of ocean space. The solution of these problems requires a sound and scientific technological basis in marine science and technology.

The seminar will expectedly generate ideas and policy directions on the subject through thematic dialogue, studies and research. ■



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13,594 Researchers Benefited from COMSTECH Scientific Literature Search Service

This service is proving very helpful in the face of increases in subscription prices of journals and databases. The researchers of twenty member states, which include People's Republic of Bangladesh, Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, Djibouti, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Iraq, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Malaysia, Kingdom of Morocco, Republic of Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, have benefited from this facility.

Apart from services to the OIC research community within the OIC region, COMSTECH also supplied literature to OIC scientists and students performing short term research in Japan, South Korea and United Kingdom.

Through Literature Search, COMSTECH is trying to promote scientific research with minimal cost by the OIC scientific community in order to develop a certain level of indigenous capability in the OIC region. COMSTECH Inter-Library Network is also providing a good help to researchers on which COMSTECH News plans to publish a separate report in one of the coming issues.

COMSTECH Literature Search Service is specifically designed for active researchers who frequently require abstracts of current research in fields similar to their own work.

"An environment to be conducive to research activity, it is important for scientists to keep abreast with what is happening around the world as well as keep others informed of what they are doing. Journals, especially those published

by commercial firms, are expensive and out of reach for most of the OIC universities and research establishments.

This service is proving very helpful in transforming the science and technology scenario in the COMSTECH member states", desk in-charge of the programme told COMSTECH News

To benefit from COMSTECH literature Search Service program, users are required to complete a form available on COMSTECH website www.comstech.org and enter correctly-spelled keywords before returning it to COMSTECH by email.

It is important to note that the data is sent in MS Word 7 format or as txt file by email and COMSTECH does not mail hardcopies of the information obtained from the searches.

The searches lead to the required information if the keywords are expertly supplied.

All scientists/researchers/students/science policy makers of the OIC member states are eligible to obtain scientific literature from COMSTECH free of any charges.

Website Links:

<http://www.comstech.org/links/Progs.htm>

Forms download:

<http://www.comstech.org/links/COMSTECHForms.htm>

COMSTECH Email addresses for Literature Search Service Requests

comstech@comstech.org Or: comstech@isb.apollo.net.pk ■

Comments?

We'd love to hear from you. Feedback may be sent to the editorial team.

COMSTECH

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Reporting and Editing
M. Ameen Amjad

Design & Layout
Ikram Abbasi

Web and Email Editions
Usman Quddus

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COMSTECH Secretariat,
33-Constitution Avenue, G-5/2, Islamabad-44000, Pakistan
Tele: (92-51) 9220681-3,
Fax: (92-51) 9211115/9220265
email: comstech@comstech.org
<http://www.comstech.org>