



COMSATS Newsletter

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Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS)



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Patron

Dr. Intinan Elahi Qureshi, T./
Executive Director

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Contributions from readers are welcome on any matter relevant to the mission of COMSATS, namely the promotion of South-South cooperation in Science and Technology for sustainable progress of the developing countries. The responsibility for the accuracy of any information rests with the original source. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of its editors, publisher or COMSATS.

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From the Executive Director's Desk

"COMSATS" is an acronym that is immediately recognized in Pakistan, but only the most informed would be able to say, without stumbling, what it stands for. The reason for its widespread familiarity stems from two flagship projects in Pakistan: COMSATS Internet Services (CIS) and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), launched during the formative years of the organization in late nineties. Both these projects have their presence in major cities of Pakistan through their local offices and campuses. The lack of popular understanding about the status of COMSATS as an international organization, established as a result of inter-governmental agreement, is what prompted us to highlight our activities through a newsletter. What we hope to achieve is to bring home COMSATS' role as an organization of 21 developing countries across three continents, who have joined hands on non-ethnic, non-religious and non-regional basis, motivated solely by a desire to develop their indigenous S&T capacity and bound only by their common state of under-development. These countries belong to the politico-economic category of the South. What they need is a sustainable development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", according to *Brundtland Commission's* definition. COMSATS' membership entails a strong belief that sustainable development is possible and the best way to achieve it is to foster South-South collaboration. Of course, the cooperation of the North is most desirable in this venture and should, in principle, be available where necessary, since it is in the self-interest of all nations to ensure an adequate level of prosperity for all mankind.



The Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Chairing a Meeting of COMSATS, at PM House, Islamabad, on February 23, 2009 (see page 2)

The first issue of the Newsletter, in your hands, is the first step towards the use of a new instrument in our tool-kit that aims to strengthen relations among COMSATS' community. Initially, we intend to publish it on bi-monthly basis, i.e., one issue in two months, in order to assess the quantum of content that could be covered in 8-12 pages. Later, it may be necessary to revise the frequency or the extent of coverage. We do hope that COMSATS Newsletter will become a platform for information exchange, leading to future joint ventures.

NEWS/ACTIVITIES/HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMSATS SECRETARIAT

PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN REASSURES COMSATS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PATRONAGE

In a high-level meeting, in Islamabad, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, acknowledged the role and achievements of COMSATS for the promotion of science and technology. The meeting was held at Prime Minister's Secretariat on 23rd February 2009. Recognizing COMSATS as the only inter-governmental organization (IGO) based in Islamabad and hosted by Government of Pakistan, he assured Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. Imtihan Elahi Qureshi, of the Government's support to the initiatives taken by COMSATS. He also agreed to enhance the annual financial grant for COMSATS Secretariat.

The Prime Minister, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Commission, was briefed by Dr. Qureshi, on COMSATS' national and international programmes and projects. The meeting was attended by the Minister for Science and Technology, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Sector, and officials from the ministries of Science & Technology, Finance and Foreign Affairs.

The Prime Minister consented to the proposal of COMSATS Secretariat to hold the Commission's Meeting in the year 2010 in Pakistan, and directed to form a Steering Committee to organize the event. The Prime Minister also approved the proposal submitted by the Ministry of Science and Technology to organize the Consultative Committee Meeting in Nigeria, in April 2009. Besides, the Prime Minister advised the concerned ministries to support COMSATS' pioneering projects in Pakistan, particularly: the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) for its on-going development projects; the COMSATS Internet Services (CIS) for expanding its operations through WiFi services and R&D on Internet technologies, and COMSATS' initiative of Tele-health services for its expansion in the rural areas of Pakistan.

COMSATS STRENGTHENS BILATERAL TIES WITH ICGEB

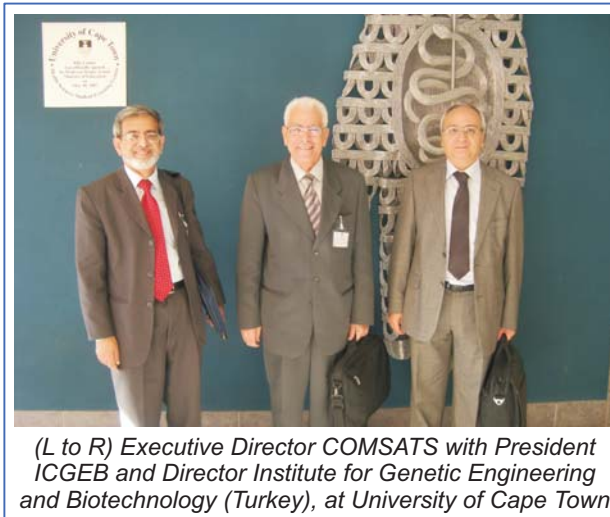
COMSATS strengthened bilateral ties for scientific collaboration with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed at the end of 2008 and came into effect from 1st January 2009. Dr. Imtihan

Elahi Qureshi, Executive Director COMSATS, and Prof. Francisco E. Baralle, Director General ICGEB (Trieste), agreed to make joint efforts to enlarge the constituency of both the organizations, in order to give better service-coverage through their projects and programmes. Moreover, both the organizations will invite one another to their important meetings to facilitate scientific outreach. The MoU that encompasses information and scientific exchange, technical cooperation and collaboration for training and research, was approved in the 15th meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of ICGEB, held from 26th to 30th November 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa.

ISESCO-COMSATS JOINT COOPERATION PROGRAMME EXTENDED FOR THE YEAR 2009

COMSATS and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) have agreed to extend their Cooperation Programme for the year 2009. Earlier under the

Programme with ISESCO, COMSATS organized three international conferences in Malaysia, Jordan and Lebanon, in 2008. Two international events under this programme have now been scheduled for the first half of 2009 in Islamabad and Damascus. Moreover, COMSATS developed a web-portal, Islamic-World Science Net (IWSN), to facilitate information and scientific exchange among 57 Muslim states, most of whom are developing countries. Virtual thematic groups of IWSN (www.icpsr.org.ma) will be launched in March 2009.



(L to R) Executive Director COMSATS with President ICGEB and Director Institute for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (Turkey), at University of Cape Town

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN (SAPM) ON SOCIAL SECTOR BRIEFED ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS AND ON-GOING PROJECTS OF COMSATS

Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, SAPM on Social Sector, acknowledged the efforts of COMSATS for socio-economic development of its member countries, during her recent visits to its Secretariat. The Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. Imtihan Elahi Qureshi, briefed Ms. Wazir Ali about the initiatives that COMSATS has taken over the last 14 years and discussed matters relevant to its future activities. The current programmes and projects of COMSATS were reviewed, especially in the light of the mission and objectives of the Commission. She was pleased to know about the progress made by COMSATS, since its establishment in 1994, and advised to maintain strong focus on addressing the needs of common people.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMSATS CHAIRS THE 27TH MEETING OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND THE 14TH MEETING OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF CIIT

The Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. Imtihan Elahi Qureshi, chaired the 27th meeting of the Management Committee of COMSATS, in Islamabad, on 7th February 2009. The Management Committee plays an advisory role and helps the Executive Director in taking appropriate policy-related decisions on projects and programmes, as well as administrative and financial matters of the Secretariat.

The Committee reviewed the activities of COMSATS and its flagship projects. Preparations made for the upcoming meetings of the Coordinating Council and the Consultative Committee received special attention. The Committee was also informed about the efforts of COMSATS Secretariat for convening the Commission's Meeting in 2010, in coordination with the Ministry of Science and Technology of Pakistan.

Earlier, Dr. Qureshi, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), chaired its 14th meeting on 4th February 2009 in Islamabad. The Board of Governors examined and endorsed most of the future development plans of CIIT and provided policy level guidelines as to the opening of new campuses of CIIT. The meeting also approved several academic and financial matters included in the agenda.

COMSATS TO SYNERGIZE WITH NAM S&T CENTRE

The common objective of supporting science-led development, shared by COMSATS and the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). NAM S&T Centre is based in New Delhi (India) and has 44 developing countries as its members. The MoU signed on 2nd February 2009, aims to promote South-South cooperation in science and technology for socio-economic uplift of the developing countries. The MoU establishes the scope for cohesive efforts to effectively utilize S&T resources for achievement of science-led sustainable development.

In accordance with their respective charters, both the organizations have agreed to: consult and cooperate for the development of programmes of common interest; promote human resource development; build capacities in S&T, and facilitate South-South Cooperation. In order to facilitate exchange of information and expertise and transfer of technology, both the organizations intend to jointly organize international workshops/conferences, undertake R&D activities, and prepare and disseminate state-of-the-art reports.

COMSATS AND TUSDEC JOIN HANDS FOR COOPERATION

COMSATS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC), based in Pakistan, during a formal ceremony held at COMSATS Secretariat, on 21st January 2009. By virtue of this MoU, COMSATS and TUSDEC have agreed to establish CAD/CAM centres. TUSDEC will, particularly, offer to build CAD/CAM and skill development centres for COMSATS' member countries, in order to support efforts made for poverty reduction and capacity building of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Other areas of mutual cooperation include: rendering engineering-support to build human capacity for industry in COMSATS' member states, making joint efforts to create and maintain a pool of experts, and assisting each other in development of industry-academia linkages for sustainable socio-economic growth.

EFFORTS MADE TO EXPAND COMSATS' MEMBERSHIP

COMSATS Secretariat is endeavouring to expand the membership of the Commission. The Executive Director and the Director General (IA) COMSATS have approached the Governments of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and Malaysia, in order to invite them to become members to the Commission. The Government of RSA has already consented to participate in COMSATS' programmes and activities as an 'observer'. In this regard, Deputy High Commissioner of RSA in Pakistan has also been requested to follow-up on the membership initiative and to propose a scientific organization as a potential member of COMSATS' Network of International S&T Centres of Excellence.

IMPORTANT MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMSATS

5th Jan. 2009	H.E. Mr. Hameed Ullah Jan Afridi, Minister for Environment, Government of Pakistan
14th Jan. 2009	Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, Coordinator General, COMSTECH
14th Jan. 2009	H.E. Mr. Ridhwan Adebayo Mustapha, Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria to Pakistan
20th Jan. 2009	H.E. Mr. Saleh Al Jawarneh, Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan
27th Jan. 2009	H.E. Mr. Muhammad Kashif Murtaza, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan
31st Jan. 2009	H.E. Mr. Masood Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan to China
2nd Feb. 2009	H.E. Mr. Un Shin, Ambassador of South Korea to Pakistan
9th Feb. 2009	H.E. Mr. Riad Ismat, Ambassador of Syria to Pakistan
13th Feb. 2009	H.E. Muhammad Azam Khan Swati, Minister for Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan

ACTIVITIES/NEWS OF COMSATS' CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

LEADING IT EXPERTS PARTICIPATE IN CIIT'S 6TH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON FIT

COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) organized the 6th International Workshop on Frontiers of Information Technology (FIT) from 18th to 19th December 2008, in Bhurban, Pakistan. Leading researchers in the field of Information Technology (IT) from Pakistan and abroad were among the participants. Prof. Dr. M.J.T. Smith from Purdue University, USA, delivered the keynote address, on 'Digital Models for Audio Signal Processing with Applications to Enhancement'. The address was followed by parallel sessions focused on various invited talks and presentations of the research papers. The proceedings of the workshop included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for academic and research collaboration between the departments of Computer Sciences of CIIT (Abbottabad), Pakistan, and University of Leicester, the United Kingdom.

CIIT PARTICIPATES IN VARIOUS SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

In order to strengthen academic synergies among COMSATS' member countries, CIIT is offering 10 scholarships to bright and deserving students from these countries for post-graduate studies at CIIT, under its International Cooperation Programme.

Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Biomedical Materials (IRCBM) of CIIT Lahore Campus organized the 1st International Workshop on 'Research Proposal Writing' in December 2008. Concurrently, the Department of Management Sciences launched a 'Guest Speaker Programme', whereby eminent scholars are invited every month to deliver lectures on national and international issues, as well as on subjects having great importance for personality development of students.

Earlier that December, CIIT, in collaboration with a local NGO, organized a 'Handimarathon' in Islamabad, to spread awareness about the disabled and their special needs for leading a normal and healthy life. As part of such activities for social uplift, CIIT ran a four-day 'Health Awareness Campaign' also, to promote health awareness among the youth, in November 2008. The campaign consisted of a series of lectures on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), heart and kidney care, eye care, and blood-borne diseases.

CIIT HOSTS SAICON-2008 ON THE THEME OF 'GLOBALIZATION & CHANGE: CONCERNS, ISSUES & IMPACT'

Under the auspices of the Academy of Global Business Advancement (AGBA), COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), which houses the South Asia Chapter, hosted its 1st South Asian International Conference – SAICON-2008 – from 12th to 14th November 2008, in Bhurban, Pakistan. The theme of the Conference was 'Globalization & Change: Concerns, Issues & Impact'.

More than 50 international experts deliberated on a wide spectrum of issues relevant to: human resource management; technology management; health management; corporate governance; marketing; finance; accounting; economics and social sciences. The event was attended by more than 200 people from various walks of life.

IROST HOLDS THE 22ND 'KHWARIZMI INTERNATIONAL AWARD'

The distribution ceremony of the 22nd Khwarizmi International Award (KIA) was held on 3rd February 2009, under the auspices of Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST), in Tehran, Iran. The Award is sponsored, every year, by several international organizations, including COMSATS. It recognizes the efforts of Muslim researchers, innovators and inventors from all over the world, and appreciates their invaluable achievements and contributions to various fields of science and technology. COMSATS has been supporting this Award since 1997 by sponsoring two cash prizes for 'Major/Significant Technological Innovations having Proven Economic Benefits'.



Executive Director COMSATS addressing the concluding session of SAICON-2008 in Bhurban

NATIONAL DAY FESTIVAL ACKNOWLEDGES THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF IRANIAN SCIENTISTS

In order to acknowledge and appreciate the remarkable achievements of distinguished Iranian scientists and researchers in Innovation and Flourish Category, the Vice-President of Technology Innovation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, held the 'Innovation and Flourish National Day Festival', from 1st to 3rd February 2009, in Tehran. Hundreds of scientists and innovators presented their innovation and technology products. The participating scientists/innovators were also given an opportunity to showcase their achievements in an exhibition.

IRCC COORDINATES VARIOUS ACTIVITIES ENCOMPASSING THEMES OF INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY-TRANSFER

Industrial Research and Consultancy Centre (IRCC), Sudan, organized a one-day workshop on the novel theme of 'Engineering and Industrial Design: A Path Towards Self-Reliance', on 8th February 2009, in Khartoum, Sudan. The highlight of this event was the display of three prototype-equipments: CFC recovery and recycling unit, wasted paper recycling equipment and evaporative distillation unit for essential oils, designed by IRCC.

Earlier this year, in collaboration with UNESCO Chair on Transfer of Technology (UNESCOTT), IRCC organized two of its monthly Forums on the themes: 'Aspects of Ethanol Production in Sudan' and 'Challenge of Beet Sugar Industry in Sudan: Beet-Durability and Beet-Storage'. The discussion forums were tailor-made keeping in view issues and challenges of the industrial sectors in Sudan. During February 2009, Leather Research and Technology Centre of IRCC concluded the 'First Training Programme for the Disabled on Leather Handicrafts Design and Manufacturing'. The programme was launched on 24th December 2008 and lasted six weeks.

RSS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES ITS MAJOR PROGRAMMES DURING 2008

Royal Scientific Society (RSS), Jordan, in collaboration with various international development organizations, has been actively engaged in various S&T activities during the year 2008. These activities include: research projects, international events, as well as patent grants.

Among the major achievements of RSS is the successful completion of one of its research projects, titled 'PROMET'. Initiated in 2004, PROMET was a three-year European funded project, carried out under the auspices of 'Sixth Framework Programme'. The project developed an approach to monitor and protect collection of metal artifacts using state-of-the-art portable analytical techniques and new corrosion inhibitors that were environment friendly, economic, safe and effective in use. RSS also conducted five international events during the last year on diverse themes and was granted five patents by the Jordanian Patent Office.

ICENS TO INITIATE NEW RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN 2009

The International Centre for Environmental and Nuclear Sciences (ICENS), Jamaica, intends to continue its Soil Geochemical Mapping Programme, as well as initiate new research activities in areas such as, lead contamination, plants and food composition, and elemental composition of

human tissues, all having the potential to significantly contribute to Jamaica's socio-economic development.

In the Soil Geochemical Mapping Programme, an increased research focus will be on applications of agricultural productivity, such as land-use, forensic investigations and public health. Research in the area of lead contamination will be carried out with a view to improve public health. Apart from soil remediation and phytomining, priority research areas in plant and food composition will be the elemental analyses on calcium, phosphorous, iron, zinc, etc. Besides, research in plants and food composition will be directed to ensure better quality of agricultural products acceptable for exports under country-specific requirements. A research on the elemental composition of human tissues will study many trace-elements in selected human specimen from Jamaican population, to get a broader picture of the distribution of elements in their bodies.

NRC TO FOCUS ON ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY THROUGH GENETIC BIOTECHNOLOGIES

National Research Centre (NRC), Egypt, will organize two international conferences in Cairo in 2009, in the field of biotechnology to improve quality of life at large.

In April this year, the 1st International Conference on 'Biotechnology and Environmental Safety' would be organized. The participating biotechnologists will present their papers on various themes that include: genetic biotechnology in wild flora and fauna; biotechnology in farm management; genetic resources conservation, and agriculture environment. Another conference, titled 'Biotechnology for Better Future', would be held later this year from 3rd to 5th November. The scientific areas that will be covered in this conference are: medical biotechnology; animal biotechnology; plant biotechnology; microbial biotechnology; molecular farming; nano-biotechnology; industrial biotechnology; biosafety; bioinformatics, and biophysics.

EMBRAPA RURAL SHOW STRESSES THE NEED FOR PROPER ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Embrapa Agrobiologia organized a Rural Show – Coopeval 2009 – from 9th to 13th February 2009, in Parana, Brazil. The event covered different areas of agriculture, (for example, Orchard Soil, Legume and Sugarcane Health). Children being the target-audience, a short-animated film, titled 'The Story of John Lettuce', was televised at the event. The film focused on amelioration of agricultural productivity through correct instructions on organic agriculture. Some publications of Embrapa Agrobiologia were also presented at the event.

Courtesy: <http://www.cnpab.embrapa.br> (2nd Feb. 2009)

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

PROMISING DISCOVERIES IN HEALTHCARE

Stem-cell researchers from University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) have produced electrically active motor-neurons from induced pluripotent stem (iPS) of human cells, as quoted in an online edition of the journal *Stem Cell*. The discovery is believed to be useful for muscle-cell contraction studies and devising new treatments for neurological disorders using patient-specific cells.

Another health-related discovery was made by the University of California-Riverside (UCR). The chemists of the university have been able to make the selective catalyst, platinum, used in the process of hydrogenation, more selective just by controlling its shape. The catalyst performs most selectively when it assumes a tetrahedral shape with the atoms arranged in a honeycomb lattice, whereby partially hydrogenated fats can be produced without making a harmful by-product – trans fats. This discovery is believed to bring a massive impact to the health of common man since it directly influences his everyday life.

STEPS TAKEN TO REVITALISE S&T SECTOR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Recognizing the importance of science and technology for socio-economic progress, several developing countries have taken major steps to strengthen their S&T institutions. Three developing nations, Ghana, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, got their new science and technology ministers after considerable time gaps. Similarly, Colombia has been reported to have increased the status of science and technology through legislation, whereby its renowned institute, COLCIENCIAS, will acquire the level of a ministry. These steps indicate the governments' revitalised commitments to S&T development. Brazil will establish a national centre for stem cell, the National Laboratory of Embryonic Stem Cells. The centre will open this July and is expected "to direct the stem cell research to specific health issues faced by the developing countries", as reported by *SciDev.Net*.

NEW INROADS MADE IN ENERGY RESEARCH

A thrust in research on production and consumption of energy continues around the world, keeping in view its intertwined effects on climate change. Despite a considerable decrease in the oil prices, the world's worries about energy-security have not diminished. Alternate resources of energy such as biofuels are getting continued attention of the university-laboratories and industries.

ScienceNews has quoted research of Sandia National Laboratories and General Motors Corp., for assessing the feasibility of producing 90 billion gallons of ethanol per year. This amount of ethanol is believed to suffice for replacing

nearly one-thirds of the estimated total annual consumption (by 2030) of 180 billion gallons of gasoline. The main focus of these studies was industrial processes by which non-food forms of biomass are converted into sugars, suitable as biofuels. A research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has revealed a two-step process for converting raw biomass into biofuel involving intermediate organic chemicals, while another research work of a Swiss biofuel company, Butalco GmbH, describes a possibility of upgrading commercial yeast with an enzyme for the production of biofuel.

Scientists of Pennsylvania University have discovered a novel method for the production of methane by reacting water and carbon dioxide with the energy of sunlight, using 135 nm wide titanium dioxide hollow nano-tubes. The new research seeking a cost-effective production of biofuel is followed by a new study on production of clean-energy that takes into account the environmental concerns. Los Alamos Lab, New Mexico (USA), has shown that more efficient solar cells are possible using carrier multiplication phenomenon, as reported by *ScienceNews*. The researchers have suggested that there is significant promise for nano-sized crystals as efficient harvesters of solar radiations.

CLIMATE CHANGE – A THREAT FOR WORLD'S FISHERIES

SciDev.Net has reported a study led by a Malaysia-based World Fish Centre which has declared 33 countries, including Bangladesh, Colombia, Pakistan and Uganda, as highly susceptible to the effects of global warming on fisheries. The study was carried out to assess the vulnerability of various countries to climate change and was based on methods developed by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). According to it millions of people dependent on fisheries, in Africa, Asia and South America, could face unprecedented hardships as a consequence of climate change. The study asserts the need for the implementation of more effective policies on mitigation and adaptation, in order to ensure that fisheries continue to support the poor.

3-D STACKED CHIPS BREAK THE 'MEMORY WALL'

Industrial manufacturers have successfully used three-dimensional designs to stack the chips to break through the so-called 'memory wall' and to quickly retrieve instructions and data from memory in microprocessors, as reported in *IEEE's* online newsletter (18th February 2009). A high chip-speed is acquired through a comparatively thick vertical interconnects-through-silicon vias (TSVs), which create a dense, high-speed, high bandwidth interchip connection. According to the analysis, the TSVs enables: substantial power reductions, smaller systems, and faster communications. The 3-D stacked chips have been produced using TSV technology. These are being marketed by Toshiba Corp., and are intended for mobile handsets.

PROFILE OF COMSATS' INTERNATIONAL S&T CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY CENTRE (IRCC), SUDAN

Introduction

Industrial Research and Consultancy Centre (IRCC), Sudan, was established in 1965 with the assistance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The Centre is affiliated with the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Sudan, while the Ministry of Finance fully covers the research and running expenses of the Centre.

Mission and Functions of the Centre

The mission of IRCC is to participate in the promotion and development of the industrial sector in Sudan, by conducting research and rendering consultancy, with an aim of raising the standard of industry and competitiveness of local products. The organizational objectives of IRCC include:

Research and Development: IRCC is working on a wide range of research and development activities. The aim is to transfer, improve and adopt appropriate modern technologies for optimum exploitation of locally available raw materials.

Capacity Building: The Centre holds a number of training courses on an annual basis, in various disciplines including food technology, plant maintenance and management, leather technology, quality assurance, oil and soap production, welding, cosmetics, paints, plant management, marketing and information systems.

Technical Services: IRCC offers technical consultancy services to public and private sectors in Sudan. These include: undertaking feasibility studies, asset evaluations, providing quality assurances, conducting case studies, supporting preparation of technical proposals and case studies, as well as cooperating with concerned institutions to lay down the standard specifications for industrial and commercial products. Besides, the Centre supports the government departments in developing and implementing national plans, and disseminates latest technical information to various sections of the industry.

Regional and International Programmes: The Centre collaborates with regional and international organizations and/or institutions to implement and support research and development programmes, as well as country-wide sector-specific studies.

Departmentalization

The Centre has six research departments, each of which represents a branch in the industry. These six research departments are:

- Chemical Industries Department (pharmaceutical products, plastics, pulp and paper and other chemical products);
- Food Industries Department (food science, microbiology, and biochemistry);
- Engineering Department (engineering design, electricity and electronics, textile and building materials);
- Leather Technology Centre (tanning and leather goods);
- Economics and Social Studies Department (economy, business and administration, accounting, women development and small-scale industries), and
- Information Research Department.

These research departments are backed by the Central Laboratory and a full-fledged Information Centre, which includes a library, audio/visual equipment and a computer lab.

International Cooperation

IRCC enjoys the patronage and support of regional and international development agencies, such as: UNIDO, UNDP, AOTS, CFC, WAITRO, AIDMO and COMSATS. The support comes in the form of technical aid for building national capacity in the industrial sector.

Facilities

The Centre has two workshops and six pilot plants. Moreover, it has laboratories entrusted with specific functions that include: i) quality assurance of the food industry, ii) chemical analyses of different materials, iii) testing of ceramic and building materials, and iv) testing of leather and leather goods.

For further details contact:

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A Front View of Industrial Research and Consultancy Centre (IRCC), Khartoum - Sudan

FORTHCOMING SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

- 10-12 March 2009** 1st Meeting of the Coordinators of the Scientific Thematic Groups for Enhancing Cooperation among Islamic Countries, Islamabad, Pakistan. (www.icpsr.org.ma)
- 14-16 April 2009** 1st International Conference on Biotechnology and Environmental Safety, Cairo, Egypt. (www.ceas-nrc.org/News.php)
- 5-7 May 2009** Seminar on Bridging Gaps for Industrial Development: Interface Between Academia, Policy and Industry, Damascus, Syria.
- 22 June- 4 July 2009** 34th International Nathiagali Summer College on Physics and Contemporary Needs, Nathiagali, Pakistan. (www.ncp.edu.pk/INSC/index.htm)
- 8-17 July 2009** Workshop on How to Build a Habitable Planet, Cape Town, South Africa. (www.ictp.it)
- 20-22 July 2009** Conference on Operational Modeling of Oceanographic Coastal Areas, Cape Town, South Africa. (www.ictp.it)

1ST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING & 12TH COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETING Abuja, Nigeria (27-29 April 2009)

The Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) is pleased to announce the convening of its 1st Consultative Committee Meeting and 12th Coordinating Council Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, from 27th to 29th April 2009. The meetings are being hosted by the National Mathematical Centre (NMC), Abuja, Nigeria.

In the first high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee, its members will deliberate on important matters relating to the formulation of general policy of the Network, strengthening of networking among the Focal Points and Centres of Excellence of the Network, besides other important relevant issues. Concurrently, members of the Coordinating Council will meet, in order to review the present activities of the Network, as well as to decide its future course of action.

On behalf of NMC and the Commission itself, I take this opportunity to invite all the members of COMSATS' Consultative Committee and Coordinating Council to join us in Abuja. We look forward to your active participation and valuable contributions.

Announcement

Tajammul Hussain
Director General (IA)
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A BRIEF ON COMSATS

The Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) is an inter-governmental organization, with its Secretariat located in Islamabad.

COMSATS, currently, has 21 countries as its members, spread across three continents, i.e., Latin America, Africa and Asia. A network, of 16 International Science and Technology Centres of Excellence, is also affiliated with COMSATS to contribute to scientific development of its member states. For detailed information, please visit COMSATS' website: www.comsats.org.

OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

- To sensitize the countries in the South to the centrality of science and technology in the development process, to the adequate allocation of resources for research and development, and to the integration of science and technology in the national and regional development plans;
- To support the establishment of the Network of International Science and Technology Centres for Sustainable Development in the South;
- To support other major initiatives, designed to promote indigenous capacity in science and technology for science-led sustainable development, and to help mobilize long-term financial support from international donor agencies and governments/institutions in the North and the South, to supplement the financing of international scientific projects in the South;
- To provide leadership and support for major North-South and South-South cooperative schemes in education, training and research, and
- To support the relevant programmes and initiatives of major scientific organizations working for the development and promotion of science and technology in the South.