



COMSATS Newsletter

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

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ED COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria and Mr. Baybars Altuntas, Chair WBAF, signed Letter of Intent witnessed by Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Memon (page 07)

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Digital health has emerged as an effective, efficient and economical way in the healthcare industry, transforming the way the governments and private sector could tackle medical care and well-being of the people. With advancements in technology and the use of mobile devices, digital health solutions are trendy. These include telemedicine, mobile health apps, fitness trackers, and remote monitoring, empowering individuals to take control of their health. These innovations provide convenient access to healthcare services, allowing remote consultations, access to medical information, and better monitoring of health conditions.

Furthermore, digital health has the potential to improve healthcare outcomes, engage patients more effectively, and make healthcare systems more efficient. By utilizing artificial intelligence, data analytics, and connectivity, digital health is shifting towards proactive and personalized healthcare, enabling people to lead healthier lives. By embracing and the digital health, we can pave the way for a more patient-centered, and sustainable healthcare future.

COMSATS recognizes the importance of digital health in transforming healthcare delivery and improving patient outcomes. Through its Telehealth project, COMSATS has implemented innovative approaches to benefit remote areas of Pakistan, elevating the quality of healthcare. I acknowledge the crucial role of digital

technologies in supporting healthcare services, enabling remote consultations, and facilitating patient monitoring.

Advancing onto this path, through collaborations and partnerships, COMSATS advocates and seeks to develop cutting-edge digital health solutions and technologies. Recent interactions with Government authorities and private sector people have prominently brought to the fore the issue of healthcare vis-à-vis well-being of the common people with lack of accessibility to the medical facilities. To promote partnerships among developing countries and Member States, I would happily inform that COMSATS successfully organized the third leg of its webinar series on Digital Health for Middle East and Central Asia region in the month of April 2023. Through the team work, we can harness the potential of digital technology to promote healthcare delivery, improve national health, economize healthcare expenditure and increase outreach with the vision of "Health for All."

Recently, COMSATS has signed agreement in the field of Genomics sequencing, recognizing the integration of digital health and genomics' potential in precision medicine. COMSATS is connecting with organizations from both the South and North regions to explore the opportunities in this field. The goal is to spread the advantages

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMSATS SECRETARIAT

Flags Hoisting of COMSATS Member States and Launching of COMSATS' New Website

COMSATS held a ceremony, 'Flags Hoisting of COMSATS Member States and Launching of COMSATS' New Website' at its Secretariat in Islamabad on April 18, 2023, to launch its new website. The event was also utilized by the diplomats of COMSATS member countries to hoist their respective country' flags. The event was attended over 60 representatives from diplomatic missions in Islamabad, international and regional organizations, national scientific organizations, universities and ministries.

Speaking at the event, the Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, stated that COMSATS an intergovernmental organization of 27 developing countries has the capability to achieve its goals and meet the emerging challenges of contemporary times. In this regard, he recalled some of the achievements of COMSATS' Centres of Excellence in the areas of space sciences, IT and telecommunications, bio-sciences, chemical engineering, telemedicine, industrial applications and software solutions. Ambassador Zakaria apprised the audience with the organization's

recent initiatives pertaining to genomics sequencing, IT training and tech hub since his joining as the Executive Director, which are meant to supporting innovations, patents, commercialization of scientific products and solutions, and developing R&D culture in the Member States, to ensure sustainability and self-reliance.

Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, highlighted the importance of digitalization in the context of socio-economic development and called for enhanced cooperation among the COMSATS Member States, particularly for human resource development in this vital field. He noted with pleasure that Pakistan is among the fastest growing exporters of IT products and services, and has one of the highest number of IT freelancers in the world. At the occasion, the Foreign Secretary launched COMSATS' new website, which will serve as a comprehensive web-portal to allow accurate, timely, high paced decision making and information dissemination.

The diplomats of COMSATS Member States hoisted their respective country's flags, and expressed their strong commitment to support the organization in meeting its objectives.

Meetings with Diplomatic Community

Ambassador of Syria to Pakistan

Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee at his office on April 13, 2023.

The Syrian Ambassador congratulated Ambassador Zakaria on his appointment as Executive Director of COMSATS. He stated that Syria attaches high importance to COMSATS and its mandate, as well as operations in collaboration with relevant organizations.

The Executive Director COMSATS thanked the Syrian Ambassador and apprised him about the current programs carried out by COMSATS' Centres of Excellence. He also briefed him about the Coordinating Council meeting that was held at Karachi, Pakistan in January 2023.

Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan

Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, paid a courtesy call on the





Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini on April 12, 2023. Ambassador Hosseini congratulated the Executive Director on his appointment. The Iranian Ambassador appreciated the significant role that COMSATS plays and mentioned that Iran values its collaboration with the valuable organization.

The Executive Director of COMSATS, expressed his gratitude for the Iranian Ambassador and apprised him about the current programs being carried out by the COMSATS' Centers of Excellence. He also briefed him about the outcomes of the Coordinating Council Meeting that was held at Karachi, Pakistan in January 2023.

Ambassador Dr. Zakaria shared details of the activities of COMSATS in the field of genomic sequencing, support to young scholars and promoting startups and entrepreneurs. The Ambassador suggested the Executive Director's visit to Iran to further explore the areas of cooperation. Ambassador Hosseini assured of his country's steadfast support for COMSATS.

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan

The Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, called on the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, H.E. Vice Admiral

Mohan Wijewickrama at his office on March 9, 2023. The High Commissioner congratulated Ambassador Zakaria on his appointment as Executive Director of COMSATS.

The Executive Director COMSATS briefed the High Commissioner on the ongoing programs of COMSATS as well as summed up the new initiatives proposed in the Coordinating Council of COMSATS during its meeting held at Karachi, Pakistan. The High Commissioner reaffirmed his support towards enhancing cooperation among the Member States of COMSATS.

Ambassador of Tunisia to Pakistan

The Executive Director of COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, H.E. Mr. Borhene El Kamel on March 1, 2023. The Ambassador of Tunisia congratulated Ambassador Zakaria on



his appointment as Executive Director of COMSATS. The Ambassador said that Tunisia attaches high importance to COMSATS Secretariat and its mandate, as well as operations in collaboration with relevant organizations.

The Executive Director COMSATS thanked the Ambassador and apprised him of the current activities of the organization, the outcomes of Coordinating Council meeting held at Karachi in January 2023 and ongoing programmes of COMSATS' Centres of Excellence.

Webinar on Health for All through Digitally Enabled Efficient Health Systems

Continuing its streak of activities focusing advocacy for digital health in its member states, COMSATS organized the third leg of the series of regional webinars on Digital Health on 11th April 2023. The webinar was participated by the health experts from Middle East and Central Asia.

At the start of the event, Dr. Azeema Fareed, Additional Director Health/ Incharge Telehealth, COMSATS, elucidated the rationale for organizing this activity. She highlighted that as healthcare becomes more decentralized and digitalized, it is essential for stakeholders, policymakers, and governments in developing countries



to keep up with these advancements and such events bring together various stakeholders at a single platform. Sharing his views at the inaugural session, the Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Nafees Zakaria, noted that digital technologies have been instrumental in supporting the delivery of healthcare services, enabling remote consultations, and facilitating the monitoring of patients' health status. He expressed hope that by working together, we can leverage the power of digital technologies to transform healthcare delivery, improve health outcomes, and ensure that no one is left behind. He also emphasized that such cooperation would lead the way to help build better health systems that are able to fulfill the "Health for All" vision.

The technical session was moderated by Dr. Najeeb AL Shorbaji, who currently is the President of the eHealth Development Association of Jordan and formerly served as Director, Department of Knowledge, Ethics and Research, World Health Organization Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. Shorbaji in his remarks underlined the importance of ICT in health despite a number of challenges like privacy and interoperability and poor IT infrastructure.

In all, six subject experts and scholars, representing various organizations, shared the developments being made in the area of digital health. In his keynote address, Dr. Vajira Chair for Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health (CWCDH) highlighted the potential benefits and opportunities of digital technologies in healthcare

systems prepared by CWCDH. These include enhancing diagnostics and monitoring of vulnerable, health workforce data collection and training, dissemination of information to people and equitable access to the healthcare. He also shared the potential risks and challenges of IT in health that include lack of standardization, privacy of data and poor accessibility. He stressed the need of the intervention of the Governments and organizations like WHO and ITU to move forward. He shared that CWCHD is running technical support program to many of its member countries.

Dr. Saverio Bellizzi, Emergency Team Lead, WHO Jordan, informed that COVID-19 has acted as the accelerator for the digital health in the region. He shared the results of a survey conducted in 2021-22 that showed multiple digital health apps developed for vaccinations, Telemedicine, diagnostics, mHealth, etc. during the period. Dr. Saverio shared another survey that showed that very few countries in the EMRO

region of WHO have digital health policy implemented. He also presented the scenario of digital health in Jordan and informed the participants that a unified platform with dashboards for all Health indicators has been planned for the country in 2024-25.

In her presentation, Dr. Hosna Salmani, a PhD scholar in Health Information Management, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran highlighted the key features of Iranian electronic health record system, biggest electronic Health record project of Iran. She informed that currently there is 90 percent EHR coverage of the Iranian citizens.

Dr. Hyam Bashour, shared the recent interventions of digital health in her political and economic crisis hit country that has major healthcare challenges. The interventions include; Health resource and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) and Early Warning Response System (EWARS), rapid mortality surveillance with ICD coding, health Information system for



Primary care and electronic medical records for hospitals.

Introducing the participants with the eHealth system of UN Relief Work Agency (UNRWA), Engineer Ghada Ballout, UNRWA eHealth Project Manager, Palestine, underlined the main feature of the software that includes modules for Non-communicable diseases, Maternal & Child Healthcare, and outpatient care. She also informed that during COVID-19, telemedicine and emergency mode were also added.

Continuing with the elucidation of UNRWA's eHealth System, Dr. Zoheir EL-Khatib, Deputy Field Health Program in UNRWA Gaza field gave the status of software's implementation in Gaza. He appraised the audience that all health centres of UNRWA in Gaza are using the eHealth System. He also explained the features of the system being used by Gaza field office.

The webinar highlighted that electronic health records (EHR) is at the core of digital health. Lack of modern infrastructure, resource constraints, untrained human resource, absence of policy direction and lack of standards were identified as some of the challenges in digitalization of healthcare. Region specific issues include power cuts and technological barriers, sanctions, and crisis and conflict were also highlighted.

The webinar concluded on the note of promoting Digital Health and building synergies amongst various stakeholders for effective implementation of digital health applications in developing countries. Participants called for joint efforts in promoting digital health as means to achieving citizen centric healthcare systems that reaches out far and wide with efficiency and cost-effective access by all. The webinar was organized to join the world community in observing World Health Day

commemorated on 7th of April.

COMSATS and Syndesis Health Inc. join hands for Genomic Sequencing Programs

COMSATS signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Syndesis Health Inc. on April 3, 2023. The LoI would enable reaching a Memorandum of Understanding to offer 'turnkey' solution to COMSATS' Member States and pave way for establishing, financing and managing "National Genomic Sequencing Programs" for the interested Members.

Syndesis Health Inc. is a company incorporated in Delaware, USA, with its business office at New York. It accelerates research and innovation for healthcare, life sciences, and biotechnology companies. On behalf of COMSATS, the LoI was signed by its Executive Director, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, while for Syndesis Health Inc, its Co-Founder & Director, Mr. Kamil Mehmood signed the Letter.

This collaboration will enable healthcare organizations of the Member State to provide citizens with personalized medical recommendations based on their unique genetic makeup, provide better healthcare to the citizens, support development of new drugs and treatments, and devise guidelines

and regulate pharmaceutical products manufacturing, within the country or in case of importation, specific to its citizens' requirement.

Some of the technical activities of the program will entail upgradation of existing Labs, promote scientific researches, identification of 'genetic markers' for certain diseases, help structure and combine 'genomic sequencing' with the existing 'health records' with hospitals across the country, and provide AI powered software and analytics.

ED COMSATS Calls the Governments to adopt digitalization for effective governance

The Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Nafees Zakaria urged that governments should adopt digitalization as citizen centric national policy for efficient and effective governance.

He was addressing the 22nd Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), which is a technical advisory body of the UN responsible for supporting the work of its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) concerning the promotion and development of public



administration and governance among Member States particularly in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in support of the implementation and review progress of SDGs. The session was held on March 30, 2023 at UN Headquarters, New York.

The Executive Director COMSATS was invited to share expert views on 'stimulating public sector innovation through digital technology and measuring the impact of digital government. The thematic session, 'Urgently transforming institutions for a greener, more inclusive and more resilient world at a time of multiple crises'.

Referring to the imminent economic crisis, Ambassador Zakaria said that the real challenge would be how we use technology to lessen its impact. He suggested that digitalization should be pursued by the governments as a national policy initiative. He noted that digitalization helped a great deal during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and that it bridged the work gap created by mandatory social distancing and isolation by transforming remote working to put the global economy back on track to a great extent.

Noting the widening technological gap and the capacity between the developed and developing countries, he suggested joint efforts to bridge knowledge, technology and resource gap. He remarked that COMSATS is pursuing the objective of self-reliance by way of exploiting the knowledge and scientific strengths of the COMSATS member states. He also informed the gathering that COMSATS has launched and executed successful transformation citizen-centric programs that enable and improve collaboration between citizens, government entities, and relevant private sector industry participants, and that COMSATS is open to partnership.

6th Term of ANSO-BIDI School on 'Innovation, Sustainable Development and Leadership Enhancement'

From the platform of the Belt & Road International Innovation Development Institute Network (ANSO-BIDI Institute Network), the Centre for Environmental Economics of the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CEE-UCAS), China, in collaboration with the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO), COMSATS, and other members of the Network, organized the sixth term of ANSO-BIDI School on 'Innovation, Sustainable Development and Leadership Enhancement' (online training).

The online training would have 8 weekly modules spanning over 2 months during which distinguished subject experts from well-known universities and prestigious international organizations will give lectures on several topics, including communicating graphically; technology and manufacturing; sustainability of business operation; risk management & green finance; disruptive technologies; brand value upgrading and sustainable

development growth; etc.

The opening ceremony of the event was held virtually on 23rd March 2023, which was attended by over 150 participants from various countries. Among others, 75 trainees belonging to the Member Countries of COMSATS, including Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia, are participating in the training course, and were present during the opening ceremony.

The opening ceremony preceded by remarks by Prof. Desheng Wu, Dean of the Belt and Road College & Director of Research Centre for Environmental Economics, UCAS, China. Moreover, the representatives from collaborating organizations including Prof. Xiaowei Nie, Assistant Executive Director, the Secretariat of the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO), China; Dr. Guo Lugang, Vice President of Beijing Association for Science and Technology (BAST), China; Prof. Luiz Davidovich, President of the Brazilian Academy, Brazil; Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, Prof. Dr. Hasan Mandal, President, the Scientific and Technological Research



Council of Turkiye (TUBITAK), Turkiye; Mr. Vardan Sahakian, Deputy President of National Academy of Sciences, Armenia; Prof. Regdel Duger, President of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Mangolia; Dr. Niguse Bekele, Dean of College of Agriculture and Veterinary Science, Ambo University, Ethiopia; Dr. Yong Xie, Director of International Cooperation Office of the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, China; and Prof. Dr. Philippe De Maeyer, Senior Professor, Department of Geography, Ghent University, Belgium, participated in the opening ceremony and delivered speeches.

In his video-recorded address, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, emphasized that creating a critical mass of experts, capable of taking on leadership roles in innovation and sustainable development, is imperative for socio-economic growth of a country. He stated that Leadership Enhancement is a vital requirement for driving innovation and sustainable development, and effective leaders must possess key attributes such as vision, empathy, communication, and collaboration skills to inspire and empower individuals towards a shared goal. Ambassador Zakaria underscored the importance of collaborative efforts among nations, institutions, and stakeholders in identifying sustainable and effective solutions to prevailing socio-economic challenges. He informed that COMSATS has been promoting South-South and Triangular collaboration in science and technology through a variety of initiatives related to capacity-building; collaborative research and development; as well as exchange of knowledge, experiences, good practices and technological resources among the member countries. Ambassador Zakaria reflected upon the ongoing mutually advantageous cooperation between COMSATS, ANSO, and UCAS, and reaffirmed



COMSATS' unwavering dedication to sustained collaboration from the platform of ANSO-BIDI Institute Network in promoting scientific excellence, capacity building, and nurturing leadership in developing countries.

The opening ceremony was followed by first module of the training course entitled 'Communicating Graphically', which was conducted by Prof. Philippe De Maeyer, Department of Cartography and Geographic Information System (GIS), Ghent University (UGent), Belgium.

COMSATS and WBAF sign Lol to collaborate in S&T

COMSATS signed a Letter of Intent (Lol) with the World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF) on March 21, 2023 to set in motion a process towards formalizing cooperation in science and technology through concluding an MoU, subsequently. The MoU, to be concluded, would be a framework aimed at supporting R&D institutions, research scholars, innovators, startups, academics and entrepreneurs in COMSATS Member States.

WBAF – an affiliate partner of G-20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPII) – engages policy

makers and partners to develop smart policies that will provide financial support to startups, scaleups, SMEs and all entrepreneurs to help them transform their business. It has ten country offices in five continents.

The Lol was signed by Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, and Mr. Baybars Altuntas, Chair WBAF, on behalf of their respective organizations. Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Memon, was the Chief Guest on the occasion. He along with Ambassador Shahid Kamal, a seasoned diplomat, who has served as Advisor to the COMSATS, witnessed the signing ceremony. Senior officials of COMSATS were also present on the occasion.

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of AI-powered genomics to the member states. Through research and partnerships, COMSATS aims to promote the application of genomics in digital health solutions.

To achieve these goals, COMSATS entered into agreement with Syndesis Health Inc., USA, which has expertise in healthcare, life sciences, and biotechnology, through research and innovation. This partnership aims at developing capacity of COMSATS' Member States.



COMSATS celebrates International Women's Day

COMSATS celebrated the International Women's Day on March 8, 2023 at its Secretariat in a gracious ceremony attended by its officials. This year, the theme of the Day is 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality', which is aligned with the priority theme of the upcoming 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67).

The Executive Director, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, in his message highlighted the importance of women in the nation building, society and other walks of life. He stated the quotes of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, verbatim "There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women." In this regard, he acknowledged the equal contributions being made by female officials and staff working at COMSATS.

It was noted that through innovation and technological advancements, women are playing a pivotal role in creating a more inclusive and promising future for sustainable development. The ceremony was an illustration of COMSATS' commitment towards empowering women and creating a

conducive work environment for utilizing their talent and development of the organization.

Meeting between ED COMSATS and Special Advisor to the President of Ghana

The Special Advisor to the President of Ghana on SDGs and Liaison for COMSATS' affairs, Dr. Eugene Owusu, and Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. M. Nafees Zakaria, exchanged views on Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) led regional development on March 3, 2023.

The Republic of Ghana holds the Chair of COMSATS and the incumbent President of Ghana, Hon. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo is the incumbent Chairperson of COMSATS' Commission.

Ambassador Nafees briefed Dr. Owusu on various ideas and initiatives that he has earmarked to chart future course of action. He apprised the Advisor on the outcome of the 24th meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council at Karachi, Pakistan. Both underlined that the expertise of the Centres of Excellence needs to be fully exploited. Dr. Owusu appreciated the ideas shared by the Executive Director and considered them spot on for leveraging the overall operations of COMSATS as intergovernmental organization focused at ST&I led sustainable progress. They

agreed that the Executive Director may visit Ghana, in particular, and other Member States, to brief on his plans to the Members of the Commission. The Advisor said that the idea of holding Commission meeting during the current year with Accra Forum meeting alongside, was welcome.

COMSATS Secretariat supports Plantation Campaign

The Government of Pakistan launched a nationwide spring tree plantation campaign to address the challenges posed by climate change. The initiative aims to promote a green Pakistan by planting trees across the country to reduce carbon emissions, protect ecosystems, and create a sustainable environment for future generations.

In keeping with the Government of Pakistan's drive and COMSATS' own objective aligned with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, the Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammed Nafees Zakaria planted the national plant of Pakistan Jasmine at COMSATS Headquarters and COMSATS Technology Park, joined by all the staff. In his address, Dr. Zakaria emphasized the importance of plantation and advised everyone to plant trees at their places and help improve environment.

The Executive Director noted that plantation plays a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. He stated that the current global climate emergency warrants urgent action by every country, organization, and individuals. He commended that COMSATS host country Pakistan's active approach towards ensuring a greener and sustainable future. Dr. Zakaria's message to his colleagues at COMSATS on the occasion was a call for action by everyone to take responsibility for the environment.

SOME ACTIVITIES OF COMSATS' CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

CUI-Pakistan Organizes VC Forum 2023

CUI-Pakistan organized the 5th edition of the Vice Chancellors' Forum (VC Forum) on Universities in the Islamic World: Towards Disruptive Technology in a Globalized World, on March 19, 2023 in Islamabad, Pakistan. This two-day Forum was jointly organized with Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, British Council Pakistan, Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Pakistan

More than 40 heads of universities from 20 OIC counties and 200 Vice Chancellors from local universities were among the 250 Vice Chancellors, Rectors, and Presidents of universities / higher educational institutions of the Islamic countries that participated in the VC Forum this year.

The Forum fostered collaboration, networking and knowledge exchange in higher education sector across the Islamic countries. During the forum, panel discussions highlighted themes such as transforming traditional faculties, improving online education, tools for innovation, and technology commercialization.

One of the highlights of the Forum was the formally inauguration of the 'Ilm-Bank' by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal. The idea of 'Ilm Bank' was proposed by the Chairman, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed. Ilm Bank, a virtual bank, aims to establish a knowledge consortium of higher education institutions in OIC member states, facilitating centralized access to cross-border education, training, and research opportunities.



The Forum concluded with presentation of key recommendations by Rector CUI, Prof. Muhammad T. Afzal, including skill-focused education, embracing new technologies, bridging academia-industry gap, AI risks, promoting gender equity, and investing in infrastructure urging Islamic governments to allocate 1% of GDP to higher education.

Inauguration of the ICESCO Chair for Big Data Analysis and Edge Computing at the Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad. Dr. Al Malik, Director General, ICESCO, handed over the formalised agreement of the establishment of the Chair to Vice Chancellor QAU, Prof. Dr. Niaz Akhtar.

Visits at CUI-Islamabad

Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan

Ambassador of Turkmenistan/ Dean of the Diplomatic Corps to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov called on Rector, CUI, Prof. Muhammad T. Afzal, at the Islamabad Campus. The Ambassador expressed interest in bilateral collaboration with CUI for science and education, suggesting exchange visits and conferences.

Speaking at the occasion, Prof. Afzal shared that CUI has over 33,100 Pakistani and 360 international students from 23 countries enrolled in Bachelors, Masters, and doctoral levels programs.

Mr. Movlamov invited CUI in the upcoming 2nd Meeting of Turkmenistan-Pakistan Joint Working Group on Science and Education, in 2nd quarter of 2023. The Ambassador advised COMSATS' students to participate in international competition on 'High Technologies and Innovative Projects' being organized from March 1 to October 10, 2023.

President, King Faisal University, Chad

Prof. Mahamat Boukhari Hassan, President, King Faisal University, Chad, visited CUI, Islamabad on March 22, 2023 and met with Rector CUI, Prof. Muhammad T. Afzal. During the meeting, Prof. Boukhari expressed his strong desire for mutual collaboration and cooperation with CUI, and the opportunity for Chadian MS and PhD students to study at CUI.

Finnish Global Education Solutions (FGES)

On March 13, 2023, Mr. Risto Vahanen,

Chairman of the Board, Finnish Global Education Solutions Ltd. (FGES), Finland, visited CUI and met with the Head of International Office, Mr. Ali Tawab Baloch. They explored avenues of collaboration between CUI and FGES and Finnish universities.

Mr. Vahanen informed that the FGES provides services like professional / institutional development, trainings and educational travel programs. Mr. Vahanen also visited laboratories of the Electrical and Computer Engineering department and received comprehensive briefing on the facilities, resources, and digital information systems to support students and faculty at the University along with CUI's active collaborations with two Finnish universities.

CUI and Curtin University Forge Path for Joint Collaboration with MoU

CUI-Pakistan and Curtin University, Australia, signed an MoU through online ceremony on March 8, 2023. The agreement encompasses various areas of mutual cooperation, including the exchange of staff and students, promotion of joint scholarly activities, conduct cultural, educational, and R&D projects, as well as the facilitation of study tours.

Prof. Syed Asad Hussain, Director, CUI Lahore Campus, and Prof. Seth Kunin, Deputy Vice Chancellor Global, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective universities. Prof. Abhijit Mukherjee, Dean of South Asia at Curtin, witnessed the MoU alongside Mr. Ali Tawab Baloch, Head International Office CUI.

Prof. Hussain, expressed hope and confidence that the two universities will be able to establish a long-lasting research and teaching partnership. Moreover, Prof. Kunin noted that the



signing of an MoU is a step in the right direction which will lead to establishing meaningful collaboration in line with Curtin University's global strategy.

ITI-Sri Lanka Receives the Best Science and Technology Institute Performance Award

At the 9th Biennial Conference of Science and Technology (BICOST), held on March 23-24, 2023, in Colombo, the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), Sri Lanka, received the prestigious 'Best Science and Technology Institute Award' for the period 2017 to 2021. This prestigious award administered by the National Science and Technology Commission (NASTEC), Sri Lanka, takes into account S&T performances of Sri Lankan institutions.

ITI-Sri Lanka upgrades its Organic Agriculture Testing Laboratory

With financial assistance from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (a German development agency), ITI, Sri Lanka, upgraded its existing laboratory. The Institute aims to offer accredited

and internationally recognized analytical services for organic agriculture stakeholders, including testing of organic fertilizer, soil, water, residue analysis, and nutrition labeling.

Internship program at ICCBS-Pakistan

ICCBS-Pakistan is holding a two-month long 16th Summer Internship Program-2023 in science and technology during June and July 2023.

The internship program is open to last year's graduates and final year students in diverse scientific disciplines.

ICCBS-Pakistan Organizes IAS, two-day Conference

On March 7-8, 2023, a two-day conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) on 'Challenges to Promote Science & Technology for Socio-Economic Development in OIC Countries' was held at ICCBS-Pakistan.

The conference was jointly organized by ICCBS, IAS and COMSTECH. Eminent scientists from various countries attended the conference focusing on

to introduce new global trends and technologies in science and educational policies for the OIC Member States.

Al Farabi KazNU-Kazakhstan Explores Avenues of Cooperation

Collaboration with the China University of Petroleum-Beijing

On April 4, 2023, Rector Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU, Prof. Zhansait Tuimebayev, held a meeting with Mr. Bian Dezhi, Director General, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in Central Asia and Russia. Proposals on bilateral cooperation were discussed at the meeting.

The Rector elaborated the university's achievements and proposed the establishment of a CNPC office within KazNU. Mr. Bian Zhi, wishing to cultivate strong ties with KazNU, highlighted that the China University of Petroleum is one of the leading universities in China as training specialists in the oil industry. He emphasized that the collaboration between the two universities will greatly benefit the joint training of personnel and the implementation of a double-degree education program.



KazNU Establishes Partnership with the Government of Germany for Joint Project

On March 16, 2023, a delegation of the Federal Ministry of Education



and Research (Germany) headed by Professor Hendrik Meurs, visited the Al-Farabi KazNU. At the meeting, Rector, KazNU elaborated on the progress of cooperation with German universities, as well as proposed to jointly establish a research center at KazNU campus. The systematic implementation of the initiatives was mutually agreed.

Memorandum of Cooperation signed with the Turkic Academy

Rector KazNU, Prof. Tuimebayev met with the President, Turkic Academy, Dr. Shahin Mustafayev on March 30, 2023. During the meeting, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between KazNU and the Turkic Academy. The memorandum encompasses activities such as training, utilization of library resources, publishing and exchanging scientific work, as well as jointly organizing seminars.

Prof. Tuimebayev emphasized the importance to integrate science and education among Turkic states and informed that KazNU has established the Research Institute of Turkology and Altaic Studies to study the rich heritage of the Turkic world. Meanwhile Dr. Mustafayev wished to conduct scientific research within the framework of the memorandum along with research focus

on rare manuscripts, ancient books, and valuable data.

KazNU Collaborates with the SFEDU, Russia, and Signs agreement with Penn State University, USA

On April 10, 2023, Rector Al-Farabi KazNU, received a delegation of the Southern Federal University (SFedU), Russia, Prof. Maxim Bondarev, Vice-Rector for Project Activities and Mr. Ruben Tsitsuashvili, Head of the International Service Department, and discussed avenues of cooperation. The meeting explored proposals for fostering partnerships, teachers and students exchange, and promoting scientific internships.

Prof. Bondarev aspired to conduct research in various fields of science and implement developmental projects. He expressed willingness to initiate students' exchange and a dual-degree program.

In another development, KazNU reached MoU with Pennsylvania State University, USA, during the visit of its officials, Prof. Stephen Barnes, Dean of Faculty of Law, and Prof. Dennis Jett, Professor of International Affairs, on April 11, 2023.

Under this MoU, the two universities will

foster collaboration in education and research, promote academic mobility for students and faculty, and implement a dual degree program. Rector KazNU also proposed the establishment of a branch of Penn State Law at KazNU.

KazNU Establishes the 'Institute for the Brain' to Advance Neuroscience Research in the country

On April 6, 2023, Rector Al-Farabi KazNU in a meeting with Dr. Almira Kustubayeva, Head, KazNU's department of Biophysics, Biomedicine and Neuroscience, resolved to develop neuroscience in Kazakhstan. Dr. Kustubayeva has been successful in establishing the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at the Al-Farabi KazNU.

This pioneering center will conduct fundamental and applied research on the brain and will focus on studying neuromechanisms of emotional and cognitive functions, as well as consciousness.

The Brain Institute's scientific research aims to enhance rationality, develop brain-computer interfaces, emotional state processes, correct deviant development, and prevent cognitive function decline during aging.

Advancing Scientific Frontiers: RSS-Jordan Way to Progress

Princess Sumaya Delivers Keynote Address at Washington Science Meet

HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, President of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), delivered a keynote speech at the 2023 meeting of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Washington, D.C. The event, held from 2nd to 5th March, 2023 focused on the theme of "Science for Humanity".

"Humanity is not equally served by



knowledge," noted the Princess addressing the urgent need for a boundary-free and equitable approach to knowledge for the betterment of humanity. Princess Sumaya emphasized, "we live in a world where knowledge is so unevenly spread and where the benefits of scientific knowledge are often absent where they are most needed".

Princess Sumaya inaugurates Newton-Khalidi Fund Researcher Links Workshop Celebration

On March 21, 2023, the Newton-Khalidi Fund Researcher Links Workshop was held under the patronage of Princess Sumaya, President RSS. The event was jointly organized by the British Council in Jordan, in partnership with RSS and the Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordan.

Princess Sumaya awarded certificates to the researchers and project planners under the Newton-Khalidi Fund/ Researchers Links Workshop. The event encompassed an exhibition that showcased the projects and their impact, alongside panel discussions focused on Jordanian research strategy and enhancing the effectiveness of Jordanian-International research collaborations.

RSS and UNDP jointly undertake Climate Security project

RSS joins hands with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement a Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)-funded project, 'The Climate Facility to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: Climate Action for Human Security in the Arab Region'.

Under the project, 18 water management pilots have been installed by Jordanian start-ups in Jerash and Al-Mafraq. This was done in an effort to consolidate sustainable development goals and water conservation. The project promotes climate change adaptation through water efficiency and smart agriculture, contributing to sustainable water management and indirectly enhancing climate security.

Empowering Science: TUBITAK-TURKIYE's Commitment to Advancement

IMECE High-Resolution Earth Observation Satellite Launched into Space

Türkiye's first domestically-produced high-resolution imaging satellite IMECE, was successfully launched into space.



IMECE was launched on April 15, 2023, from Vandenberg Space Force Base in the USA by Falcon 9 rocket.

Funded by TÜBİTAK and the Presidency of Strategy and Budget of the Republic of Türkiye, which was designed, developed, and produced by TÜBİTAK UZAY for the customer institution the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Defence Industry Agency and end-user Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Defence Turkish Air Force.

The satellite will provide Türkiye with high resolution imagery for different purposes, such as disaster management, mapping, environment and agricultural practices, and defence.

MoU between TÜBİTAK UME (Turkish National Metrology Institute) and the Mongolian Agency for Standardization and Metrology Mongolia

On March 13, 2023, TÜBİTAK UME signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mongolian Agency for Standardization and Metrology (MASM), with the aim of developing scientific metrological collaborations. Since 2019, both the organizations have maintained a continuous partnership, particularly through the Project Settlement Program organized in collaboration with BIPM-TÜBİTAK UME, where MASM technical

personnel received long-term training at TÜBİTAK UME and made progress through calibration services provided.

TÜBİTAK UME and MASM have expressed their intention to enhance cooperation in the field of metrology. The primary objectives of the MoU include nurturing joint projects, facilitating collaboration, and exploring new avenues of partnership, such as expanding educational capabilities.

Participation in the United Nations 5th Least Developed Countries Conference LDC5

Prof. Hasan Mandal, President, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK), participated in the LDC5 Conference, a series to get international attention for the socio-economic betterment of most vulnerable countries, in Doha, Qatar on March 6-7, 2023. During the conference,



he took part in a prominent roundtable discussion called 'Harnessing the Power of Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development of Least Developed Countries' as the lead discussant. Additionally, he served as a panelist in a session titled 'Innovative Partnerships for Technology Transfer and STI Capacity Development,' and delivered presentations on the topic.

Inauguration of MEDIBIYO and BKTM at TÜBİTAK Vaccine and Drug Development Campus

The Medical Biotechnology Excellence Center (MEDIBIYO) and the National Biological and Chemical Testing Center (BKTM) were inaugurated at the TÜBİTAK Vaccine and Drug Development Campus, within a ceremony hosted at the TÜBİTAK Gebze Campus.

MEDIBIYO aims to support the development and production of biotechnological drugs and vaccine candidates, laboratory analysis, Preclinical studies of vaccine and drug candidates, developing new diagnosis and treatment systems.

BKTM will focus to meet Türkiye's national defense needs by testing of defense products against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats will be carried out.

Scholarships/Fellowships for Member States by COMSATS' Centres of Excellence

The COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Pakistan, has offered Graduate (MS and PhD) scholarships for Fall 2023 session for students/researchers belonging to COMSATS Member States.

This scholarships are offered in the following key programmes: Computer Science; Management Science; Electrical Engineering; Biosciences; Mathematics; Physics; and Meteorology

The relevant details, including academic programs, eligibility criteria, admission procedure and schedule, application form, etc. are available on CUI website: (http://ww2.comsats.edu.pk/internationalstudents/COMSATS_HQ.aspx).

Students from COMSATS' Member States and Centres of Excellence are encouraged to benefit from this opportunity. The last date for submission of applications is June 30, 2023.

For further details on the scholarships, please visit www.comsats.org or write to farhan@comsats.org.

CCIB Workshop on 'Green Biomanufacturing of Future Food'

From the platform of COMSATS Joint Centre for Industrial Biotechnology (CCIB), Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology (TIB), in collaboration with COMSATS, is organizing the online Workshop on 'Green Bio-manufacturing of Future Food', under the CCIB Joint Research and Development Group (JRD).

This workshop aims to promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge between R&D organizations and future food industry, and to explore potential cooperation opportunities for research & development and technology demonstration on future food. The workshop includes keynote speech, technical talks/presentations by subject expert from China. Technical session featuring talks/presentations by five eminent scientists from China, Pakistan and Nigeria; and a panel discussion session.

Date: 6th July 2023

Details at: <https://www.comsats.org>

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