NIC PESHAWAR

NEWSLETTER

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INTRODUCTION

September was a month of moving forward at NIC Peshawar—helping founders prepare for their next chapter, connecting ideas with opportunities, and strengthening the relationships that support entrepreneurship in KP. This edition shares stories from our community and the work underway to help more businesses grow beyond the boundaries.



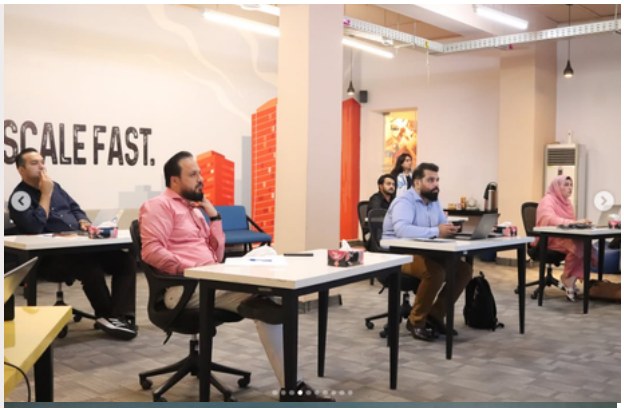
MAIN EVENTS

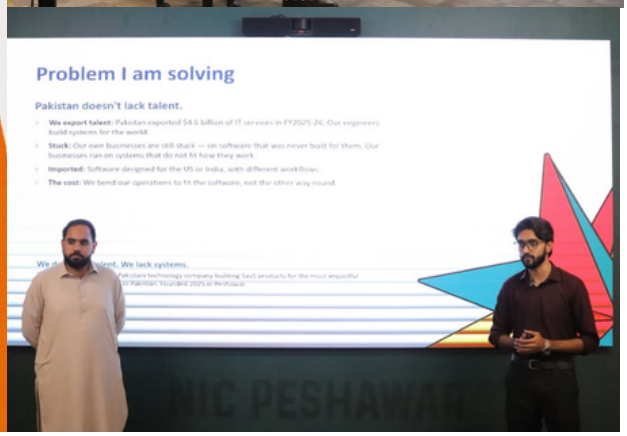
COHORT 16
From Interviews to Final Pitches

September brought NIC Peshawar closer to welcoming its next cohort of founders as the Cohort 16 selection process progressed through interviews and the final pitching round. The interviews offered an opportunity to understand the applicants' ideas, the challenges they aim to address, and their ambitions for building a business.

Shortlisted startups then took the stage to present their ventures before a panel of judges. Through their pitches and the questions that followed, founders explained their proposed solutions and made their case for joining NIC Peshawar.
We thank every founder who participated and the judges who contributed their time and expertise to the selection process. With the final pitching round complete, the announcement of the selected Cohort 16 startups will mark the beginning of their incubation journey.







INVEST LAB 4.0

InvestLab 4.0 brought prospective investors together at NIC Peshawar for three days of learning, discussion, and direct engagement with startups. The program helped participants explore startup investing and understand how they can contribute to the growth of early-stage businesses.

Led by Maria Carolina Romero, the sessions focused on assessing investment opportunities, asking the right questions, and understanding what goes into an investment decision. Barrister Ahmed Uzair complemented these discussions with legal insights, helping participants better understand the legal considerations involved in startup investing.

Participants also heard founders pitch their solutions, connecting the learning sessions with businesses being built within the startup community. These interactions gave prospective investors an opportunity to hear directly from entrepreneurs and engage with their ideas.

Through InvestLab, NIC Peshawar continues to address the need for informed investors who can offer guidance and connections alongside capital. The fourth edition helped more prospective investors take that first step, while strengthening dialogue between founders and the people who could support their growth.



INVESTOR SUMMIT & GRADUATION

NIC Peshawar's Cohort 13 and 14 Graduation and Investor Summit brought together founders, investors, partners, and ecosystem leaders from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The gathering celebrated the graduating startups while creating space for investment conversations and discussions on the future of entrepreneurship in the province.

The event welcomed H.E. Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as Chief Guest. Startups took the stage to pitch their solutions to investors, sharing the businesses they are building and the opportunities ahead. Graduating founders received their certificates, marking the completion of their incubation journey and the beginning of their next chapter. The Local Champions Spotlight recognised the founders, investors, and supporters helping strengthen KP's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Their contributions highlighted the importance of local leadership and collaboration in creating opportunities for emerging businesses.

Conversations continued over a networking dinner, giving attendees further opportunities to connect and explore potential collaborations. As one of NIC Peshawar's largest gatherings, the event brought the community together around a shared purpose: helping founders move forward and building stronger support for entrepreneurship in KP.



PITCHING LEAGUE FINAL

Turning Preparation into Performance

NIC Peshawar's Pitching League concluded in September with a competitive finale, bringing months of preparation, pitch training, and repeated challenges to the stage. Startups put their learning into practice, presenting their ventures with greater clarity, confidence, and conviction.

Dekord emerged as the winner, while Faryal's Baby Photography secured the runner-up position. Their performances marked the culmination of sustained effort throughout the league.

Beyond the results, the finale demonstrated how mentorship, feedback, and consistent practice help founders sharpen their pitches and communicate their business ideas more effectively.



SEEDRISE KP FUND LAUNCH

LMKT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the SeedRise KP project, strengthening its efforts to support entrepreneurship and improve access to finance for businesses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The collaboration complements LMKT's work through NIC Peshawar in preparing founders for growth and connecting them with investors.

At the SeedRise KP Fund pre-launch at IMSciences Peshawar, Amjad Ali Arbab, Co-founder and Project Lead, presented findings from the KP SeedRise Scoping Study. The study highlighted the "missing middle" for businesses seeking PKR 3 million to PKR 15 million—ventures whose needs exceed typical microfinance support but often fall outside bank lending requirements and venture capital expectations. More than 400 businesses applied for assessment, 125 were interviewed, and 56 were classified as investment-ready or near-ready. SeedRise's proposed approach combines business assessment and support with Shariah-compliant debt or equity suited to each venture's needs.
The MoU provides a foundation for collaboration around this financing gap. Alongside founder support and investor education through initiatives such as InvestLab, it reflects LMKT's focus on strengthening the connections between business readiness and suitable capital in KP.



ORBIT DEMO DAY

NIC Peshawar startups HostyAI and PQC Labs, both part of our acceleration program, participated in Orbit Demo Day in Karachi, presenting their ventures to an audience of venture capitalists, angel investors, family offices, founders, and ecosystem leaders.

Bringing together startups from NIC Karachi and NIC Peshawar, the event featured pitches and networking across sectors including AI, cybersecurity, fintech, sustainability, and more. For HostyAI and PQC Labs, it provided an opportunity to showcase their solutions and connect with potential investors and ecosystem partners.

Their participation reflects NIC Peshawar's continued efforts to help founders access wider networks and create opportunities for investment and business growth.



CURRICULUM & OPEN SESSIONS:

THE WOMEN ENTERPRENEUR

NIC Peshawar held a dedicated session for women entrepreneurs, focusing on the challenges of building and leading a business. The discussion explored navigating gender bias, overcoming barriers, and balancing personal well-being with the demands of entrepreneurial growth.
Through shared experiences and practical insights, the session created space for women founders to discuss the realities of their journeys and consider ways to approach these challenges with greater clarity and confidence.
The session formed part of NIC Peshawar's efforts to provide relevant support for founders, recognising that women's experiences and circumstances shape the support they need to build and grow their businesses.



OPEN SESSIONS

TAMEER AWARDS

CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURS WITH OPPORTUNITIES

NIC Peshawar hosted an open information session on the 13th Tameer Awards 2026, introducing entrepreneurs and startups to the program's award categories, application process, and available support.

The session highlighted cash prizes of up to PKR 1 million per category, alongside opportunities for mentoring, business support, media exposure, and pitch training. Participants gained a clearer understanding of how to apply and how the program could support their ventures.

By bringing this opportunity to the local entrepreneurial community, NIC Peshawar helped founders explore additional avenues for funding, visibility, and business development.



PARTNERSHIPS, OUTREACH, AND IMPACT

Outreach session with Precision Medicine Lab

Students from the Precision Medicine Lab visited NIC Peshawar for an outreach session exploring how research and academic knowledge can provide a foundation for entrepreneurship.

The session introduced students to the support available to aspiring founders and encouraged them to consider how their work could translate into solutions for real-world needs. The visit offered an opportunity to explore possibilities beyond the lab and connect their academic interests with potential entrepreneurial pathways.

Through such outreach, NIC Peshawar continues to engage students and researchers, helping them explore how their knowledge and ideas could develop into ventures.



EXPOSURE VISITS

LEAP

As part of NIC Peshawar's international exposure offerings, PQC Labs, Lurniva, Digital Lockers, and Rawan attended LEAP, connecting with the global technology and innovation ecosystem.

The experience gave founders opportunities to explore emerging technologies, engage with industry leaders, and showcase their innovations. It also offered a broader perspective on developments beyond their local markets and opportunities to build international connections.

By facilitating access to platforms such as LEAP, NIC Peshawar supports founders in expanding their networks, learning from global industry developments, and exploring opportunities for their ventures.





Media Coverage

DISCOVER PAKISTAN

NIC Peshawar startup ShadowBook was featured on Discover Pakistan, bringing its entrepreneurial journey to a national television audience. During the interview, the founder shared the story behind the venture and the work involved in bringing it this far.

The feature offered viewers a firsthand account of the founder's experience while introducing ShadowBook to a wider audience. It also highlighted a venture emerging from NIC Peshawar's startup community, demonstrating how media coverage can help founders share their stories and build visibility beyond the incubation centre.

