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The Centre of Biotechnology and Microbiology, University of Peshawar is proud to announce the conclusion of the Bio-Entrepreneurship course with an awe-inspiring Demo Day that included startup presentations by final year biotechnology students.

The course has been offered to students for a second year in a row now by Dr Faisal Khan, Director of the Institute of Integrative Biosciences, CECOS University, who is also a visiting faculty at the University of Peshawar.

The main objective of the course is to give science (biotech) students the necessary skills they will need to successfully bring the fruits of their research to the market, in order to benefit the common man. This in good numbers, argues the instructor, can really help our economy by solving pressing local problems and by creating jobs. The course starts with an academic overview of innovation and then switches into an 'experiential' phase where students learn the art of building a startup (around a biotech product) by actually doing it.

Winning startups were dominated by those targeting our power and energy woes. All three winners ElectroMarvel, BioVolt and BioLamp who want to make bio-based batteries and mobile chargers. Other exciting ones included CultureHub which wants to create a library of cells and strains for the local industry, BioLumin with plants that glow when infected and act as a living alarm for farmers against crop disease, Alpine wants to conserve the Himalayan Ibex by expressing its wool 'Shatoosh' in the common sheep and BioInk that is a bio-based ink which is safe to use.

Dr Faisal Khan holds a doctorate in systems biology from the University of Oxford where he also read Strategy and Innovation at the Saïd Business School at Oxford. Last year, the Bio-Entrepreneurship course produced 14 startups that were ready for investments. This year the number is 21. 'We really want to fill this city with startups. Biotech is a great sector to nurture in Peshawar, and this course is part of a concerted effort to seed the biotech industry here', said Dr Khan.

The panel of judges included stakeholders from the government, academia and private sector. 'Its really encouraging to see the creativity and energy of the students being used for the benefit of our province. Government is always looking to support tangible products that can have a broader impact and I encourage every one of you to come forward and make a case', said Amir Zeb, an official of the provincial Directorate of Science and Technology.

Salman Ahmad, a cofounder at Peshawar 2.0 said, 'This is a messy early stage effort which we have to go through if we really want to establish ourselves as leaders in any technology. The government needs to make a clear strategy for this and support such efforts in dedicated way over a period for serious impact'.