**Research with 7/11+ Innovation Challenge**

[Shaha Tariq](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/shaha-tariq/)

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Power and power distribution is an expanding field. A necessity it is and in a developing country like Pakistan, which is largely agricultural the challenges are so liberally sprinkled all over the web that it would require dedicated and focused commitment to resolve.

K-Electric is the only privately owned regulatory and vertically-integrated electricity distribution company, which is responsible for providing power to Karachi and its suburbs. It is taking numerous initiatives to facilitate communities. Their various initiatives like Roshni baji, Hara Qadam, etc. are unique for their impact and their inherent sustainability and reflect the holistic vision that KE possesses. Often in news for the all the wrong reasons, KE has upped the game magnificently and is now primed for a more celebratory and influential role that it can play. Its working mechanisms, policies, HR initiatives, and digitization is at par with any international conglomerate. Keeping in sync with this wonderful vision, they have rolled out what is perhaps a unique and the very first project of strategic innovation called the 7/11 Innovation Challenge. They identified their logistical and technical handicaps and shared them with the brains of various universities. The objective was not only to find home-based technological solutions but to give a platform to the youth and researchers alike to showcase their inventions and solutions for power-related companies. Various engineering universities and research start-ups applied, a good 300 of them, and 10 made it to the finals. The grand finale was held at Habib University with Tauseef H. Farooqi Chairman NEPRA as the honourable Chief Guest. The grand Jury that judged all the 10 finalists comprised; Farhan Anwar, Faculty Habib University, Seher Abbas, Co-Chair Karachi Hub Women in Energy & IFC, Sheikh Imran ul Haq, Energy expert, Former MD, CEO, PSO, Sheheryar Hydri Managing Partner Deosai Ventures, Shaista Ayesha CEO SEED Ventures, Naz Khan Chief Strategy Officer KE and Naeem Zamindar Founder Neem Financials. Of the 10 proud finalists, three cut the top.

INNOVentures Global partnered this wonderful initiative with KE and their Managing partner Athar Osama spoke on Innovation being the strongest lead for transition into a developed society. Its combination with commercial will act as the catalyst for a quick switch towards supporting the economy and facilitating the life of the common man. All innovations need to keep in mind the holistic vision of helping society be better and happier.

Innovation Challenge 7-11+ stands out for the sheer brilliance of the idea and the impact. Pakistani universities are not recognized for their research capacity and our students in American and British universities end up publishing papers and working on international projects while the schools and universities that prepared them for this achievement stand on the side and applaud. KE has opened up the floodgates for research to become a highlight in curriculum programs and incentives like these would bring more and more students, teachers, and academics into the fold.

I would seriously hope for this flood to drown our academics. The ten teams showcased what research can do. They had brought in solutions that were low on cost, high on impact, and carried sustainability as the core theme. The game changers today are the SDG-friendly inventions that can make this planet take a turn towards longevity with well-being.

KE’s Chief Strategy Officer Naz Khan and Chief executive Officer Moonis Alvi both shared their pride in enabling these “beautiful minds’ to present technologically advanced and environmentally sound products as a move forward for KE. Tauseef H. Farooqi Chairman of NEPRA announcement of the invitation to all 10 finalists to take up the NEPRA platform and showcase to all DISCOS In Pakistan, was followed by thunderous applause. He had just given this initiative a long life for the betterment of Pakistan and education.

The Panel discussion had Afia Salam the environmental Journalist and Wasif Rizvi President of Habib University joining the KE and NEPRA for a deep dive into the significance of the Innovation Challenge and the in-depth understanding of the very word Challenge. This was beautifully put together by Wasif Rizvi who gave examples of the last 200 years of inventions and how so many of them have been disastrous for the environment while their inventors must have innovation as the guiding principle. In the last 53 years, the biosphere has been halved. What should have been a way down over the next two millenniums has been achieved in just half a century. So it was crucial to understanding that innovation minus sustainability may not be the perfect answer and Universities must have it on their agenda to promote research for innovation with sustainability.

To cap this extremely technical and engineering-centric discussion, Moonis Alvi added a line that had me blown away – A ‘reconciliation of electrons’ and I thought if anyone could have added poetry here he has done it. I looked it up to get lost in this universe of molecular and orbital perspective but I loved the idea of sitting in a university auditorium with students and academia and some extremely compassionate and visionary leadership discussing electronic reconciliation and platforms to showcase relevant research. This is what Pakistan needs. So proud of KE for this wonderful initiative and wishing them and INNOVentures Global super success in the future for all more projects to take the Pakistan initiative forward.

*The writer is an educationist, content strategist, and storyteller. She tweets @Shahajamshed.*