

# Media Update-2

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## UN Environment Press Release

### Pakistani Startups Snag UN Environment Sustainability Grants

UN Environment, Bangkok: Two young Pakistani innovators are the recipients of a UN Environment grant worth US\$10,000 to support their efforts to make lifestyles more sustainable.

As winners of the Asia Pacific Low Carbon Lifestyles Challenge in the Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Mobility categories, respectively, Mohammed Saquib and Hassam Ud-din will also receive business and marketing training from global experts, and pitch to win an additional US\$10,000 prize to further augment their ideas.

UN Environment's Director for the Asia-Pacific region, Dechen Tsering, said, "Young innovators like Mohammed and Hassam are examples of the ingenuity we need to tackle some of the world's biggest problems. I'm particularly excited to see that both of their solutions are geared toward helping some of the poorest among us. Improving lifestyles across Asia and the Pacific must be an inclusive endeavour, and Mohammed and Hassam are demonstrating how we can get it done."

Saquib's business, Modulus Tech, produces energy efficient, low-cost modular flat-pack housing built from recycled materials. Pakistan's housing shortage is up to 10 million units, and there is a large market for low-cost housing, including in refugee and displaced persons camps. Saquib's houses come with all electrical and plumbing utilities built-in and are meant to be assembled in as little as 3 hours. Built from recyclable materials such as fibre cement composites and wood plastic composites, components have a 30-year lifespan and a carbon footprint up to 52 times lower than traditional concrete homes. The insulative material also makes the houses energy



efficient. Saquib estimates they are 3 times more energy efficient than alternatives on the market.

Saquib said, “We saw one of the worst refugee crises in the world hits its peak in 2016. Millions were displaced, and many were left homeless and exposed to extreme climate and social problems in makeshift camps and shelters. My team and I felt we could use our engineering knowledge to help. We realized an affordable, quick-to-assemble flat-pack shelter could greatly improve the lot of those displaced. I’m happy to use this UN Environment grant to bring our technology to more people who need it.”

Hassam Ud-din is aiming to fix a different scarcity: affordable, efficient transport infrastructure. Despite only 17% car ownership, Pakistan’s cities often face acute traffic jams and congestion, generating enormous amounts of pollution. While higher vehicle ownership is not sustainable, many areas without a high volume of passengers and goods are bypassed altogether by transit lines. At the same time, most cars and trucks on the road operate at 30% capacity, leaving 70% capacity up for grabs. Ud-din’s solution comes in the form of an app called RASAI, which allows for peer-to-peer sharing of a vehicle’s extra space and seats, offering inter-city ridesharing and freight-shipping capabilities. Meanwhile, freight transport vehicles can use the app to provide spare cargo space at low cost, enabling small businesses like farmers to bring their goods to market at lower cost and higher convenience.

Ud-din said, “It is often said that mobility is the single most important factor for an individual to escape poverty. I’ve seen people’s opportunities limited by the availability of transit routes that they can use. On the other hand, road congestion is horrendous. Millions of hours and billions of rupees worth of fuel are wasted sitting in traffic, while most vehicles only use 30% of their space capacity. If these inefficiencies can be removed, we could see unprecedented economic benefit for the developing world.”

### **About Mohammed Saquib:**

Mohammed Saquib is the Chief Technical Officer of Modulus Tech, with a background in civil engineering and a specialization in Construction Management. He is the structural and architectural designer of the company’s flat-pack house. With expertise in Autocad Revit, Robot Structural Analysis and BIM (Building Information Modeling), he is responsible for product improvement and performance simulation.

## About Hassam Ud-din

Hassam is a civil (transportation) engineer and a Silicon Valley-trained tech entrepreneur. He is a self-taught programmer who loves working with maps. Hassam was the youngest speaker at the Vienna Energy Forum, and has had extensive experience working with UNIDO and the startup ecosystem in Pakistan. He also mentors young Startups and is enthusiastic about working to improve the socio-economic condition of the developing world through leveraging technology.

## About the Asia Pacific Sustainable Lifestyles Challenge

The Asia-Pacific Low-Carbon Lifestyles Challenge aims to mobilize and support young people with business ideas on how to foster energy-efficient, low-waste and low-carbon lifestyles.

12 winners each receive a US\$10,000 to support their business venture focusing on one of three different categories: mobility, plastic waste and energy.

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