

Bio- Jury Members – Regional Finals – 28th August 2024

Mustafa Rasheed, Angel Investor



Mustafa Rasheed is a Singaporean Angel Investor and Startup Ecosystem Professional with over a decade of experience. During his time in the public sector of Singapore, he enabled over 3,000 startups and SMEs, demonstrating his commitment to early-stage entrepreneurship. At ING Bank's Innovation Lab, Mustafa was a venture builder, where he drove innovation and venture building by working on problem statements from various sectors. Additionally, at KPMG, he designed an accelerator program for series A startups. Mustafa's vast experience and expertise make him a thought leader, sitting on the advisory boards of several startups in emerging and frontier markets. He is also an avid speaker, sharing his insights on fundraising, business growth and the startup ecosystem at top business schools and organizations.

Madi Tazhikenov, Managing Director, White Hill Capital



Duke University graduate and expert in international development, with a proven track record of successfully implementing global initiatives with the World Bank, UNDP, UNECE, OECD, and other organizations. A startup ecosystem specialist who organized Central Asia's largest IT forum, Digital Bridge, launched acceleration programs and a VC fund, and promoted venture capital as

well as the export of IT services and products in Kazakhstan and beyond. Currently serving as Managing Director at White Hill Capital, one of Kazakhstan's largest VC funds, and at Al-Farabi Innovation Hub, a platform dedicated to helping startups and entrepreneurs from Central Asia and the Caucasus expand their ventures into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the broader MENA region.

Prof. (Dr.) Khimji Vaghjiani (Australian Innovator of the Year), Innovation and Entrepreneurship / data and Artificial Intelligence /UNSDG's / R&D / University Spin-off



Prof. (Dr.) Khimji Vaghjiani, recognized as the Australian Innovator of the Year in 2010, is a distinguished expert in innovation and entrepreneurship, specializing in data, artificial intelligence, and the UNSDGs. With extensive experience in R&D and university spin-offs, Dr. Vaghjiani has held prominent roles, including Head of Harbour City Labs in Sydney and Consultant at the NSW Data Analytics Centre, where he managed the commercialization of AI and digital assets. He is the author of "Spiritual Journey of an Entrepreneur" and the "AI Ethics Checklist for Startups" (March 2023). A Stanford SEED innovation mentor, he is actively involved in commercializing IP and establishing a social innovation hub at Torrens University, Australia, focused on using AI to alleviate global poverty. He also serves as a Visiting Professor at the Asian Institute of Technology, Yunas Centre for Innovation, and is the Chief Innovation Advisor to the Connectivity Innovation Network, an NSW Government initiative. Dr. Vaghjiani contributes to the Australian Computer Society's AI Ethics Technical Working Committee and is an Adjunct Professor at AGSM/UNSW, where he teaches digital innovation, entrepreneurship, and data analytics. His academic credentials include a PhD from AGSM in Global Disruptive Innovation. With 34 years of leadership experience across banking, military, renewables, telecommunications, and academia, Dr. Vaghjiani has managed technology transfer projects and IP development between universities and SMEs. He has also directed the Collaborative Research Centre for Smart Technology at Australian Technology Park, managed the NSW state government's innovation R&D fund, and received the Dean's Award for Teaching from Sydney University. An investor, mentor, and advisor to startups, he is currently on his seventh startup and has been recognized in the Deloitte Fast 100 Asia/Pacific for four consecutive years. Dr. Vaghjiani also supervises four Doctorate students in AI and emerging technologies in developing countries, Agile in SMEs, and cross-border leadership.

Hira Wajahat, Impact Strategy Consultant & Startup Ecosystem Advisor



Hira Wajahat serves as a consultant, coach and facilitator to create social and climate impact. Over the last 10 years, Hira has had the opportunity to work with an array of local and international organizations across various industries in Pakistan, Central & South Asia and Europe. Hira has worked extensively within startup ecosystems, providing advisory and training to new ventures on commercializing research, developing impact business models and impact forecasting. More recently, Hira has also been part of the evaluators panel for Shark Tank Pakistan.

Michael Chon, Investment Associate in ADB Frontier Fund, PSOD, ADB



Michael Chon is an Investment Associate at ADB Frontier Fund, a SME private equity fund focused on early-stage investments in Southeast Asia. Michael started his career in New York in finance and insurance before joining an investment fund in South Korea investing in publicly traded global equities. He helped raise two startups as head of business development and strategy before joining ADB. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Finance from the University of Michigan - Stephen M. Ross School of Business.

Samir Hajibayli, Investment Associate, Caucasus Venture



Samir works as an Investment Associate at Caucasus Ventures - venture capital firm based in Baku, Azerbaijan investing in early-stage startups. He oversees the dealing, sourcing and due-diligence process of all the investments. Throughout the first year of the firm, he has screened over 400 startups and participated in decision making and investment process of 20 coming from the region. Moreover, he is responsible for establishing strategic partnerships with other venture firms, government agencies and angel networks in the region.