

Press Release from District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok

The Seventh Workshop of Project PAILA (Program for Aspiring Innovators and Local Achievers) was successfully conducted on Sunday, 22nd March, 2026, at SC Bhawan, Development Area, Gangtok, as part of the ongoing efforts to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in the district. Project PAILA is a joint initiative of the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok, under the banner of Sikkim INSPIRES, in collaboration with the CSR Department of Sun Pharma, and is being implemented by Stars of Hope.

Project PAILA continues to nurture entrepreneurship, innovation, and self-reliance by providing aspiring entrepreneurs with a structured platform to transform their ideas into sustainable and impactful ventures through mentorship, interactive workshops, and hands-on learning experiences.

The seventh workshop was conducted on the theme “Marketing, Branding, Sales & Negotiation,” with the objective of equipping participants with practical tools and strategies to effectively position, promote, and scale their businesses in competitive markets. The session covered key topics, including building a strong brand identity, fundamentals of digital marketing, offline marketing strategies, customer acquisition and retention techniques, understanding the sales funnel and sales strategies, and effectively pitching products and services to potential customers and investors.

The workshop featured Ms. Sonam Choden Katsopa, Founder of Taste Bud – Homemade Chocolate, who shared her entrepreneurial journey and experiences in building a homegrown brand. She highlighted the importance of consistency, customer trust, and innovation in establishing a successful enterprise.

The technical session was led by Mr. Nitish Poudyal, Marketing Expert from the Department of Commerce and Industry, who provided in-depth insights into marketing frameworks, strategic branding, negotiation skills, and practical sales approaches suitable for startups and small businesses.

The program was also attended by Mr. Wasif Ali from the CSR Department of Sun Pharma, whose presence reaffirmed the organization’s continued support for fostering grassroots entrepreneurship and innovation under the PAILA initiative.

As with previous workshops, the program was graced by the presence of Mr. Tushar G. Nikhare (IAS), District Collector, Gangtok, who remains steadfast in his commitment to the long-term vision of Project PAILA. Addressing the participants, he encouraged them to apply the marketing and sales strategies learned during the session to strengthen their ventures and assured them of continued institutional support.

In continuation of this initiative, he shared that adverts, banners, and a promotional video announcing a pitching session will soon be displayed across Gangtok District and its Blocks, inviting applications from aspiring entrepreneurs. The tentative dates for the pitching session are between 9th–15th or 16th March, 2026. Multiple winners will be selected and will receive very limited seed funding, subject to the availability of funds under Sikkim INSPIRES, for their startups. The judging panel will comprise local entrepreneurs who have been part of the project as mentors and speakers associated with the workshops under Project PAILA.

The pitching session will be open to all, with preference given to regular workshop attendees. The opportunity is open to all. Participants will be required to prepare a brief presentation of their business idea and register through the links and information provided in the official adverts.

Participants who may not meet the specified criteria during the pitching session are encouraged not to feel discouraged, as the DAC team will continue to guide and connect them with other suitable schemes and opportunities aligned with their aspirations in the future. The initiative reflects a broader commitment to building for the future, with a long-term vision of fostering sustainable entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance in the district.

The topics covered to date in previous workshops consisted of:

- I. Workshop 1 theme: Onboarding Session
- II. Workshop 2 theme: LISTEN • ASK • THINK – “From Challenges to Ideas, From Ideas to Action”
- III. Workshop 3 theme: Market Research and Validation
- IV. Workshop 4 theme: Business Planning, Legal & Compliance
- V. Workshop 5 theme: Financial Management
- VI. Workshop 6 theme: Product Development & Operations

Upcoming proposed sessions consists of:

- I. Workshop 8 theme: Team Building, Leadership, Growth & Scaling (Sunday 1st March, 2026)
- II. Final Workshop: Preparation for the Pitching Session.

The workshops under Project PAILA remain completely free of cost, and participants are not required to pay any fees at any stage. Individuals from all age groups and backgrounds are encouraged to participate in and benefit from this transformative platform.

For further details, please contact:

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