K-Startup Grand Challenge 2025 Demo Day Showcases Global Startups in Korea, Selects Konnect as Grand Prize Winner

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA, December 19, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The K-Startup Grand Challenge (KSGC), Korea's largest inbound startup competition for high-potential global founders, successfully wrapped up its 2025 Demo Day on December 11 at COEX Convention & Exhibition Center in Seoul.

This year's program set a new record, attracting 2,626 applications from 97 countries. Following a multi-stage

KSGC 2025 Demoday Results

evaluation process, 80 teams advanced to Phase 1, with 40 teams selected for Phase 2 and invited to Korea. These startups received comprehensive support for entering the Korean market, including assistance with visas, business registration, and local settlement. From this group, the top eight teams were selected to take the stage at the 2025 Demo Day, where they presented their innovative solutions and business strategies in live pitching sessions. Final rankings were determined through on-site evaluations conducted during the event. The Demo Day was held within COMEUP 2025, Korea's flagship startup festival at COEX, connecting KSGC startups with global investors and industry leaders.

The Grand Prize was awarded to Konnect, which secured first place and received KRW 100 million (approximately US$66,700). Konnect is building a global authentication and payment platform addressing identity verification and payment barriers for foreign residents in Korea. Commenting on the win, the Konnect team stated that it plans to further develop the service into an integrated lifestyle platform in Korea, enabling tourists and foreign residents to seamlessly access authentication, payments, settlements, and convenience services without the limitations of borders.

Second place went to MaimHaim (USA), which won KRW 70 million (approximately US$46,700) for its unmanned operations solution leveraging IMU sensors and Zero UI technology. Pierrot Company (Canada) took third place and KRW 50 million (approximately US$33,300) with its data-

driven global IT asset circulation platform.

Vice Minister Roh Yong-seok of the Ministry of SMEs and Startups, who attended the event, emphasized the government's continued commitment to global entrepreneurship, stating, "We will spare no policy support to help global startups grow and succeed in Korea, and to inject new momentum into the country's innovation ecosystem."

Beyond the cash prizes, the 20 teams selected for Phase 3 of KSGC 2025, including the eight finalists who pitched on stage at Demo Day, will receive exclusive three-month follow-up support. This includes office space in Pangyo, often referred to as Korea's Silicon Valley, business matching with major Korean conglomerates, and tailored investor relations (IR) opportunities to support their successful soft landing in the Korean market.

Positioned as Korea's flagship inbound startup program, the K-Startup Grand Challenge serves as a key gateway for global founders entering Asia. In 2025, marking its 10th anniversary, the program has supported more than 1,000 international startups through structured acceleration, market-entry support, and strong connections to Korea's public and private innovation ecosystem, and continues to play a central role in strengthening Korea's global startup landscape.

KSGC 2025 Phase 3 Startups (Top 20 Teams) (Announced at Demo Day) *Alphabetical Order:

3TGDS: Travel Trust Tickets enabling instant redemption across global travel & lifestyle services
Acurion: AI detecting genomic markers for precise, efficient cancer diagnosis
ArbaLabs: Securing AI at the edge for aerospace & critical infrastructure with sovereign trusted tech
AvoLabs: AI-driven B2B EdTech tools delivering personalized learning and automation
BION: LEO™ Gluten Sensor helping manage gluten intolerance with simple food-allergy detection
Digital Human Corporation: Human-centric AI with KAi, an empathetic digital companion for elderly support
GROUNDUP.AI: AI asset management using sensors and agents to predict equipment failures early
IDOLL Robotics: Emotionally intelligent robot that sees, feels, and grows with users
InsightMatches: AI SaaS platform automating and accelerating global research and innovation matching
Konnect: Super-app for foreigners integrating search, bookings, payments, and verification
MaimHaim: AI geofencing that auto-activates location-based services at venues and facilities
Markopolo AI: AI automation platform personalizing engagement via SMS, email, push, WhatsApp, and more
Niio: Platform turning any screen into a digital art canvas streaming curated global art
Patientory: Web3 health platform enabling secure management and sharing of personal medical data

Peris.ai: AI orchestration platform detecting and responding to cyber threats in real time
Pierrot Company: IT device subscription and IT recovery service
Predulive Labs: AI infrastructure analytics detecting defects and compliance issues in real time
Protein Kapital: Sustainable alternative protein & bio-fertilizer produced using insects and food waste
RIFFAI: AI sensing technology monitoring environmental changes and pollution
Smart Contract: Automated smart contract workflows simplifying document and identity processes

Secretariat
K-Startup Grand Challenge
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/876915164