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Neural Computers

When the Machine Becomes the Program Itself.

By **Mubashra** | **University of Agriculture, Faisalabad** | Published: September, 2026
mubashramajid725@gmail.com | Position: Software Engineer

Introduction

Imagine the computer that you are reading on. It is very good at following instructions, like performing arithmetical operations, loading data files and displaying web pages, but it doesn't know what it is doing. The computer is a dumb body. The actor is the software. Change the play and script. Imagine the reverse now. A computer where the software is computer chip. where the chip is rewired between each lesson. No clear lines of code. There's no "update available". Just a gadget that learns by altering itself, just like your brain does.

It's not a dream. Neural computers have already been developed by researchers at Intel, IBM and Stanford. This is not just a science project in Pakistan's tech industry, where electricity is still a rare commodity and edge computing can go beyond out-of-date systems. It could be the foundation for the next generation of energy-efficient AI, medical devices and robots.

> ***" A neural computer doesn't run software. It becomes software. The hardware learns, physically, from experience — just like a child learning to catch a ball."***

The Brain Blueprint — Why Neurons Matter

To get neural computers, you need to understand one simple biological fact: your brain doesn't have an operating system. Memories, habits, skills, are all changes in the wiring of your neurons. Some pathways grow stronger. Others fade.

Neurons that fire together, wire together.

Artificial neural networks on your computer do this, but in software. The weights are numbers in RAM. The processor doesn't know or care. A neural computer goes the whole way: physical structure of the chip is the weights. The chip acquires knowledge, and it's stamped into the chip itself.

The Tech Making This Real Today

A slew of hardware advances is making neural computing a practical reality.

Memristors are the superstars. Memristors are resistors that remember: the more charge that passes through a memristor, the more its resistance changes - and it retains the new value even when the power is removed. It's almost exactly like a biological synapse. HP Labs and others have used memristor arrays to learn simple tasks with no conventional programming

Neuromorphic chips like Intel's Loihi and IBM's TrueNorth take a different route. They simulate the brain's "spiking" neurons: neurons only activate when required, and do not consume energy when inactive. Loihi has successfully carried out pattern recognition with 1,000 times the energy efficiency of a GPU.

Phase change materials and optical neural networks add more to the arsenal. The latter uses photons instead of electrons, matrix multiplication at the speed of light, with almost zero heat. MIT and Stanford have working prototypes.

For Pakistan, where electricity is precious, these technologies could be used to drive smart agricultural sensors, low cost medical diagnostic systems, or even drones that don't need to communicate with the cloud.

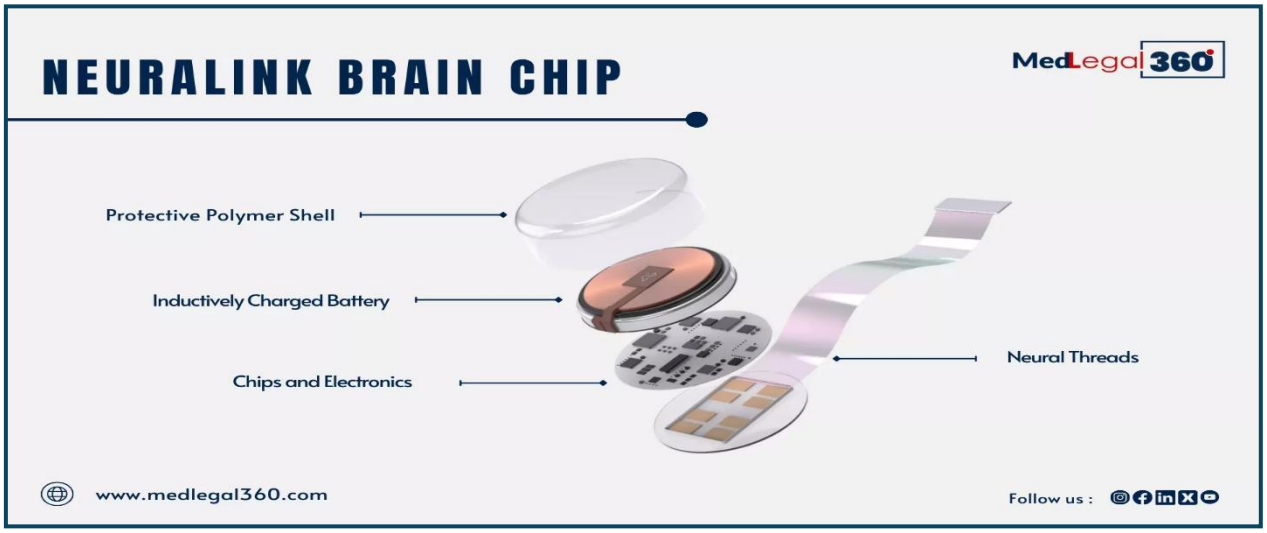
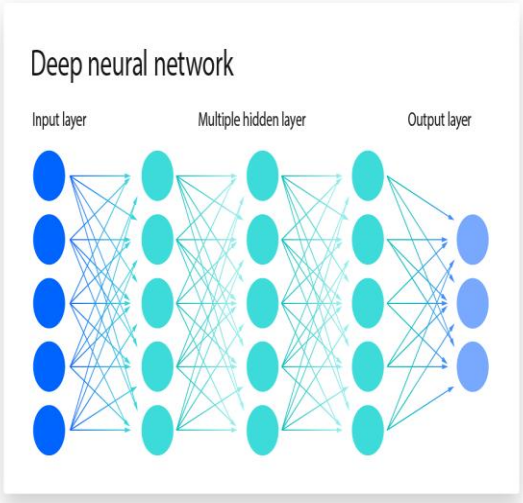


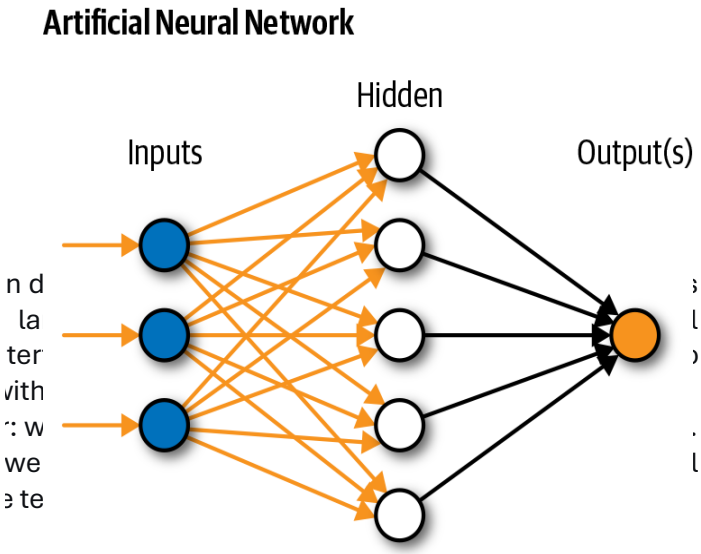
Figure 1: *Best example Of Neurocomputers (Brain Chip Implants)*

Key Findings & Impact

Radical energy savings: A human brain consumes 20 watts - a low-wattage light bulb. A data centre would use megawatts to do the same AI task. Intel's Loihi chip runs a million neurons on 70 milliwatts. That means AI at the edge for Pakistan's off grid regions.

Continuous learning. Traditional AI needs to be retrained from scratch each time it needs to be updated. A **neural computer learns** on the job. A hearing aid that adapts to your hearing loss as it changes every day. Or an agricultural drone health that improves the more it flies over your crops no internet connection required.





Discuss implications for Pakistan's tech industry — startups, enterprises, policy, or talent development. Give readers something to act on or think about.

What's Next?

Revolutions are never easy. Neural computers face real hurdles. Programming is alien. You can't program a memristor array in C++. Intel's new "Lava" tool is a beginning, but it's not like what you're used to.

Precision is messy. Analog hardware accumulates errors. Biological brains are sloppy because they have loads of redundancy; silicon doesn't.

Integration headaches. Neural chips will be integrated with traditional CPUs and memory. Designing the hybrid system to retain the efficiency gains is difficult.

Manufacturing scale. Memristors and phase change memory aren't yet integrated into conventional chip fabs. They need to come down in cost.

But the signs are clear. First we will see edge devices like hearing aids, cameras and wearables. Then robotics and autonomous vehicles. Then finally, even data centers will use neuromorphic hardware for AI inference, saving enough electricity to power a power plant. Pakistani students and academics: it's time to make a mark. Neuromorphic computing is still in its infancy, and a simple great idea - a low cost memristor based sensor to predict flooding, or a low power Urdu speech recognizer - could make a difference to the world. It's not about money, it's about talent.

> ***"The next generation of systems won't be programmed. They'll be grown, trained, and adapted. That shift will matter more to a CS student today than any language or framework."***

About the Author

Mubashra is an undergraduate student in Computer Science at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, with a deep interest in AI, and how low-power computing can transform Pakistan's tech landscape. She believes the most exciting innovations often come from working within constraints — like energy scarcity or limited connectivity. She can be reached at mubashramajid725@gmail.com.

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