INDIA FORTH
INDIA INTELLIGENCE FOR THE WORLD

INDIAFORTH | APPLIED RESEARCH INITIATIVE | INAUGURAL EDITION

# The India We Build

## Applied Policy Research Programme

From Policy Questions to Practical Solutions

Edition 01 | Defence Industry and Strategic Capability

28–29 NOVEMBER 2026 / ONLINE / GLOBAL PARTICIPATION

A youth-led programme for investigating real industry cases, testing policy and institutional constraints, and writing implementable recommendations for the IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series.

Research. Test. Recommend. Publish.

| 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| DAYS | REAL-COMPANY CASES | WHITE-PAPER SERIES | INVITED SPECIALISTS |

Convened by IndiaForth, Sydney | Applications close 27 November 2026 | indiaforth.com.au

THE PROPOSITION

# Research in the service of public purpose

A country's place in the world is shaped by who tells its story, what evidence enters public debate, and whether its people can turn national ambition into institutional capability. India's progress in defence production, technology and industrial development deserves scrutiny in proportion to its size.

IndiaForth was set up to build a credible, non-partisan, research-led platform where India's achievements, institutional constraints and future opportunities can be examined with rigour. The question it asks is practical: how can Indians at home and abroad, young people especially, help build a more capable, innovative and prosperous nation?

**Evidence over assertion.**
**Feasibility over rhetoric.**
**Research that connects national ambition with institutional capability.**

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

# An independent, voluntary Track 2.5 platform

The India We Build is an independently convened, voluntary initiative designed for Track 2.5-style engagement among universities, researchers, industry practitioners, community organisations and the Indian diaspora. It links expert dialogue with citizen participation and applied research, and does not claim to represent official government negotiations.

The diaspora is more than an audience for India's story. It holds knowledge, professional networks and institutional relationships, and the programme gives that capacity a practical form through recurring, evidence-led study of concrete national challenges. Each edition takes one defined national challenge and produces evidence-based outputs for policy and industry audiences.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Format** | Recurring applied research programme; each edition examines one national challenge |
| **Edition 01** | Defence Industry and Strategic Capability |
| **Dates** | Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November 2026 |
| **Mode** | Online, with global participation |
| **Participants** | University students, early-career researchers and emerging professionals |
| **Research work** | Five thematic cases, each tied to a real firm and a bilateral technology partnership |
| **Output** | Referenced team contributions for the IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series |
| **Convenor** | IndiaForth, Sydney, Australia |

RESEARCH RATIONALE

# Why defence innovation?

Defence capability sits where strategic autonomy, technological learning, manufacturing depth and international partnerships meet. India's ambitions are large; delivery depends on connecting research institutions, start-ups, established firms, procurement systems and global collaborators.

The programme asks what turns rising defence spending into lasting industrial capability. Participants study supplier qualification, autonomous-systems assurance, financing, military training technology and space-sector collaboration, while paying attention to policy constraints and to who holds which institutional responsibility.

METHOD

# From strategic dialogue to applied research

**01**
**Investigate**
Define a bounded, evidence-based question around a real firm or technology case.

**02**
**Map**
Identify decision-makers, regulators, buyers, funders and the policy provisions that apply.

**03**
**Evaluate**
Compare alternatives, technology dependencies, costs and the bilateral opportunity.

**04**
**Design**
Specify a feasible intervention: responsible institution, instrument, resources, measurable results.

**05**
**Defend & Publish**
Present the recommendation and write a referenced white-paper contribution.

EVIDENCE STANDARDS

Every team contribution is judged on whether a reader could check it. Claims trace to named sources. Policy provisions are cited exactly. Alternatives are compared, not assumed away. The responsible actor is named, and the result can be measured. The emphasis is analytical quality and verifiable evidence, not simulated commercial endorsement.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

# Two days, two tangible outputs

DAY 1 | SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2026

## Strategic Dialogue and Research Orientation

| | |
|---|---|
| **Opening session** | IndiaForth introduces the central research question: how can India's defence-industrial ecosystem connect strategic requirements, domestic firms, universities and international innovation partners? |
| **Panel 1: Expert perspectives on India's strategic environment** | Three invited specialists examine regional threats, the changing global security order and the institutional capability needed to turn strategic priorities into defence innovation. Moderated discussion and participant questions follow. Speakers: Lt Col J. S. Sodhi (Retd), Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das (Retd), Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan (Retd). |
| **Research orientation** | Introduction to the five cases, relevant policy settings, actor mapping and evidence standards. Teams settle their questions and preliminary sources for Day 2. |
| **EXPECTED OUTPUT** | **Preliminary actor map, policy table, identified research problem and an initial solution.** |

DAY 2 | SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2026

## Applied Research and White-Paper Development

| | |
|---|---|
| **Panel 2: Women Leaders in India's Defence Sector (proposed)** | A proposed session on women's participation and leadership across defence institutions, research, industry and technology. Speaker details will be announced once confirmed. |
| **Guided research workshop** | Teams work in thematic groups on a defined firm and technology case. They identify a concrete defence-industrial constraint, map the policy and institutional ecosystem, assess the international partnership dimension and develop a reasoned solution. |
| **White-paper development** | Each team writes a concise contribution covering the problem, evidence, actors, relevant policy provisions, alternatives, proposed intervention and implementation considerations. |
| **EXPECTED OUTPUT** | **A referenced team contribution, submitted for consideration in the IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series.** |

Session timings and joining instructions will be sent to registered participants. The schedule, invited speakers and research activities may be updated as confirmations are finalised.

DAY 1 INVITED SPECIALISTS

# Voices from defence leadership

## Lt Col J. S. Sodhi (Retd)

**FOUNDER-EDITOR, GLOBAL STRATEGIC & DEFENCE NEWS**

**Session:** *Implications on India's National Security: Emerging Threats from Neighbouring Countries and the Road-Ahead*

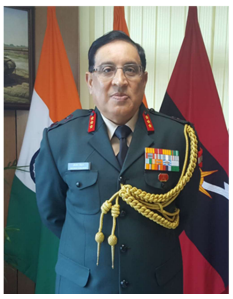
Defence and strategic affairs analyst, author and former officer of the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, with more than 21 years of service. A seventh-generation Army officer, he trained at the National Defence Academy and Indian Military Academy and holds an M.Tech in Structures from IIT Kanpur, with qualifications in management and law. He contributed to Army modernisation studies and wrote *China's War Clouds: The Great Chinese Checkmate*. His work has been recognised by the India Book of Records and World Book of Records.

## Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das (Retd)

**FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, MARITIME RESEARCH CENTRE, PUNE**

**Session:** *Strategic Security in the New Global Order*

Maritime strategist, researcher and entrepreneur working on underwater-domain awareness, maritime security and acoustic technologies. He founded the Maritime Research Centre under the Foundation for Underwater Domain Awareness and leads NirDhwani Technology. Commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1994, he completed a master's in Underwater Electronics and a PhD (2007) in underwater signal processing, both at IIT Delhi. His research appointments include the University of Tokyo and the National University of Singapore, and he has more than 100 publications.



## Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM, PhD (Retd)

**FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL, ASSAM RIFLES | PRESIDENT, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS**

**Session:** *Topic to be confirmed*

Former senior Indian Army commander, military diplomat and scholar of strategic affairs. Commissioned into the 11 Gorkha Rifles in 1979, he commanded 70 Mountain Brigade, 8 Mountain Division and 1 Corps, and served as Director General of Assam Rifles from 2016 to 2018. He later chaired the Cease Fire Monitoring Group and has served as Defence Attaché in Nepal. He earned a PhD from Panjab University (2021) on India–Nepal relations and wrote *Bridging Borders* (2024). Expertise: border security, counter-insurgency, military diplomacy and strategic planning.

FIVE THEMATIC CASES

# Research questions and team deliverables

| 01 | INDIGENOUS MANUFACTURING | INDIA–SPAIN |
|---|---|---|
| Firms | **Tata Advanced Systems / Airbus** | |
| Research question | What affordable supplier-qualification arrangements could deepen aerospace manufacturing capability while maintaining quality standards? | |
| Proposed team deliverable | **Supplier-qualification model** | |

| 02 | AI AND AUTONOMOUS DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY | INDIA–US |
|---|---|---|
| Firms | **Sagar Defence / Liquid Robotics** | |
| Research question | What accountable assurance process could support a non-weaponised maritime technology pilot? | |
| Proposed team deliverable | **Technology assurance framework** | |

| 03 | DEFENCE FINANCING AND COMMERCIALISATION | INDIA–US |
|---|---|---|
| Firms | **ideaForge / Vantage Robotics** | |
| Research question | Which procurement, leasing or service model could make a drone pilot financially and operationally viable? | |
| Proposed team deliverable | **Procurement or service-financing model** | |

| 04 | MILITARY MODERNISATION | INDIA–US |
|---|---|---|
| Firms | **Zen Technologies / AVT Simulation** | |
| Research question | How might a training service provide reliable access, technical support and measurable learning? | |
| Proposed team deliverable | **Training-service proposal with measurable outcomes** | |

| 05 | INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPLY CHAINS | INDIA–AUSTRALIA |
|---|---|---|
| Firms | **Digantara / Space Machines Company** | |
| Research question | How might a space-safety service manage data rights, operational continuity and bilateral dependencies? | |
| Proposed team deliverable | **Cross-border cooperation and data-governance framework** | |

Firm references identify research case studies only. They do not indicate sponsorship, endorsement or confirmed participation. Problems are constructed for academic analysis, and team deliverables are proposed outputs, not confirmed industry projects.

THE FLAGSHIP OUTPUT

# IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series

Selected team work will be developed into a proposed IndiaForth-edited white paper, provisionally titled *Innovating India's Defence Ecosystem: Five Firm Cases on Policy, Partnerships and Commercialisation*. Each contribution links an evidenced industrial problem to the relevant actors, exact policy provisions, bilateral opportunities and an implementable recommendation.

### WHAT EACH CONTRIBUTION CONTAINS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Problem** | A bounded industrial constraint, tied to a real firm or technology case |
| **Evidence** | Referenced, verifiable sources |
| **Actors** | Decision-makers, regulators, buyers, funders and institutions |
| **Policy provisions** | The exact provisions that apply, cited precisely |
| **Alternatives** | Compared options, costs, dependencies and the bilateral dimension |
| **Intervention** | Responsible institution, feasible instrument, resources and measurable results |
| **Implementation** | Practical considerations, risks and sequencing |

### EDITORIAL REVIEW

| CRITERION | WHAT REVIEWERS LOOK FOR |
|---|---|
| **Conceptual clarity** | A clear question and a clear line of argument |
| **Source quality** | Credible, traceable and properly referenced evidence |
| **Accuracy** | Correct facts, figures, dates and policy provisions |
| **Feasibility** | A recommendation a named institution could carry out |
| **Originality** | A contribution that adds to existing analysis |

### PUBLICATION TERMS

Editorial selection, revisions and contributor attribution are decided by IndiaForth. Publication is not automatic, and taking part does not guarantee authorship. The intended audience includes researchers, universities, industry practitioners, diplomatic missions and policy institutions. The white paper is meant to inform later research and industry dialogue. It is not an official policy position, and no government office, mission or company has been confirmed as a recipient.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

# What you will gain

### 01
**Applied research skills**

Problem definition, evidence assessment, ecosystem mapping and policy analysis.

### 02
**White-paper contribution**

A chance to develop your team's work for editorial consideration. Selection is not guaranteed.

### 03
**Industry-oriented problem-solving**

Work on a defined case involving a firm, a technology and real policy constraints.

### 04
**Expert engagement**

Sessions with researchers and experienced defence and strategic specialists.

### 05
**Research portfolio**

A documented, referenced team output, plus a certificate of participation.

### 06
**Future research pathways**

Possible routes into later IndiaForth research roles, subject to separate selection.

PARTICIPATION

# Who should apply?

The programme welcomes university students, early-career researchers and emerging professionals interested in India's strategic, industrial and technological development. Prior defence-sector experience is not required. Applicants should be willing to work carefully with evidence, engage critically and contribute to collaborative research.

RELEVANT DISCIPLINES

| | |
|---|---|
| **International relations, defence and security studies** | **Economics, industrial policy and business** |
| **Engineering, manufacturing and emerging technologies** | **Law, governance and public policy** |
| **Research, consulting and policy communication** | **Technology, innovation and related fields** |

PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP

# Convened by IndiaForth

**DR SIMRAN KESHWANI** — **Founder and Research Lead, IndiaForth.** A political economist whose research examines industrial strategy, energy transitions, economic security and international partnerships, with particular attention to how institutions, firms and policy choices shape national capability.

IndiaForth is a Sydney-based strategic intelligence and advisory organisation working across political economy, geoeconomics, industrial policy and international affairs. Its public work includes research, policy commentary and analysis of the institutional conditions behind India's global engagement.

REGISTRATION

# Join the research programme

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dates** | 28–29 November 2026 |
| **Mode** | Online, global participation |
| **Applications close** | 27 November 2026 |
| **Registration** | forms.gle/wkvWJ1qSZYcfHc9e8 |
| **Website** | indiaforth.com.au/programmes/ |
| **Contact** | contact@indiaforth.com.au |

SCAN TO APPLY

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The India We Build is independently convened and voluntary. It does not represent official government negotiations.
- Firms named in the research cases are subjects of academic analysis. No sponsorship, endorsement or participation is implied.
- White-paper publication is not automatic. Editorial selection and any external dissemination rest with IndiaForth and depend on the relevant institutional arrangements.
- The programme schedule, invited speakers and research activities may be updated as confirmations are finalised.