IndiaForth

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 a practical, solution-oriented white paper for the IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series.

Research. Test. Recommend. Publish.

2	5	1	3
DAYS	THEMATIC CASES	WHITE PAPER	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 practical, 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	A concise 800-word, solution-oriented white paper from each team
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 Write & Submit
Distil the recommendation into an 800-word white paper for the IndiaForth Youth-led White Paper Series.

EVIDENCE STANDARDS

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

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 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: 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

Guided research workshop	Teams work in thematic groups on a defined firm and technology case. They identify a concrete defence-industrial constraint, work out why it persists, and develop an original, practical solution.
White-paper development	Each team writes a concise 800-word white paper with three parts: problem statement, the puzzle, and proposed solutions.

EXPECTED OUTPUT	An 800-word, solution-oriented white paper from each team, submitted for evaluation and 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 focus areas

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?
Solution focus: 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?
Solution focus: 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?
Solution focus: 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?
Solution focus: 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?
Solution focus: 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 solution focus areas are proposed, not confirmed industry projects.

THE FLAGSHIP OUTPUT

The 800-Word White Paper

The final research output is a concise, solution-oriented white paper, not a conventional academic paper. Submissions are kept short on purpose, so that clarity of thinking, originality and practical problem-solving count for more than academic writing.

What each submission contains

Problem statement	A specific challenge within India's defence industrial ecosystem.
The puzzle	Why the challenge persists, including the technological, institutional, commercial or policy constraints involved.
Proposed solutions	Original, actionable recommendations that industry, government or other stakeholders could realistically implement.

Evaluation criteria (100 points)

CRITERION	POINTS	WHAT EVALUATORS LOOK FOR
Novelty of the proposed solution	**50**	The originality, creativity and potential of the approach to address an existing industrial or technological challenge.
Real-world applicability	**50**	The feasibility, practical relevance and potential for implementation within India's defence industrial ecosystem.

Publication and industry dialogue

Selected solutions may be developed into a proposed IndiaForth-edited white paper, provisionally titled *Innovating India's Defence Ecosystem: Five Firm Cases on Policy, Partnerships and Commercialisation*. The aim is to link youth-led innovation with industry, so that these solutions inform real discussions on existing industrial challenges, product concepts, technology improvements and future innovation pathways.

Editorial selection, revisions and contributor attribution are decided by IndiaForth. Publication is not automatic, and taking part does not guarantee authorship. The white paper is not an official policy position, and no government office, mission or company has been confirmed as a recipient.

TIMELINE

From workshop to feedback

28–29 November	Programme delivery and collaborative research workshops.
6 December	IndiaForth submits the completed 800-word white papers to an industry evaluator.
12 December	Scores and brief feedback requested from the evaluator, subject to availability.

Evaluation uses a simple scoring sheet. Dates may shift as confirmations are finalised.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

What you will gain

01
Applied research skills
Problem definition, evidence assessment, ecosystem mapping and policy analysis.

02
White-paper contribution
An 800-word paper to develop with your team, with a chance of 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
Evaluation and feedback
Scores and brief feedback on your solution from an industry evaluator, plus a certificate of participation.

06
Future research pathways
Possible routes into later IndiaForth research roles, subject to separate selection.

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. Evaluator scores and feedback do not guarantee publication or industry follow-up.
- The programme schedule, invited speakers and research activities may be updated as confirmations are finalised.