

SANKALP LECTURE SERIES

Synergy for Advanced Networks, Knowledge and Academia–Industry Learning Progress
on Emerging Technologies and Technology Transfer

INAUGURAL LECTURE

From Knowledge to National Prosperity: Building India's Innovation and Technology Ecosystem

Date

16 July 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. IST

Venue

We the Peoples Hall, UN House, 55 Lodi Estate, New Delhi, and Online

Keynote Speaker**Dr. S. Somanath**

Distinguished Scientist and former Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
Vikram Sarabhai Distinguished Professor, ISRO

A joint initiative of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) of UNESCAP

How does a nation turn scientific knowledge into lasting prosperity?

India's own journey offers a remarkable answer. Its space programme was built over six decades, with sustained investment in people, institutions, and indigenous capability. It transformed a fledgling effort into one of the world's most respected technology programmes. Milestones such as the Chandrayaan-3 Moon landing are not merely scientific achievements. They are proof that long-term investment in homegrown innovation can reshape a nation's future.

As artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, the Internet of Things, and clean energy redefine the global economy, every nation faces the same question: **How do we move from adopting technology to creating it?**

Drawing on nearly four decades at the heart of one of India's most respected technological programmes, Dr. S. Somanath shares an insider's view of the decisions, setbacks, breakthroughs, and leadership that turned scientific ambition into national capability. His experience offers practical insights for countries seeking to build resilient, self-reliant innovation ecosystems.

Lecture: From Knowledge to National Prosperity: Building India's Innovation and Technology Ecosystem

The discussion will explore:

- What it takes to lead high-stakes national technology missions
- How ISRO nurtured talent and built a culture of innovation across generations
- Why bold, mission-driven goals are essential for accelerating scientific progress
- How India built technological self-reliance and what other nations can learn from its experience

The lecture will follow a fireside chat format and an open question-and-answer session. Participants are encouraged to put in their questions that matter most to their own work and aspirations in the chat box.

A Note for Young Scientists, Students and Early-Career Researchers

Every great scientific institution begins with curious minds. Dr. Somanath's journey, from TKM College of Engineering in Kerala to leading India's national space programme, shows how individual curiosity, when matched with opportunity and purpose, can help shape a nation's future. This is a rare opportunity to hear how that journey unfolded, and what it takes to build a career that leaves a lasting impact.

What Participants Will Take Away

Participants will leave with a sharper understanding of:

- Building mission-driven institutions that sustain innovation over generations
- Turning frontier research into economic growth and national prosperity
- Strengthening technology ecosystems through leadership, talent, and long-term vision

Participants

The lecture is open to a broad community of stakeholders across the Asia-Pacific region, including policymakers and government officials, members of the academic and research community, innovators, entrepreneurs and startup founders, technical specialists, venture capitalists and investors, and students and early-career researchers in science, engineering, and technology.

Participants will come from various Asia Pacific countries, United Nations agencies, scientific and research Institutions (e.g. DSIR, CSIR), Educational Institutions and other relevant regional institutions.

The Programme

Time (IST)	Session
10:30 – 11:00	Registration
11:00 – 11:15	Special Remarks Ms. Preeti Soni, Head, APCTT Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, DSIR, and Director-General, CSIR, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator for India (video message) Group Photograph
11:15 – 12:30	Fireside Chat Dr. S. Somanath, Distinguished Scientist and former Secretary, Department of Space, Government of India and Chairman, ISRO
	Moderated by Dr. Dinesh C. Sharma, Author, <i>Space: The India Story</i>
12:30 – 12:55	Questions and Answers from participants in person and online
12:55 – 13:00	Closing Remarks Dr. Vipin Chandra Shukla, Scientist G, DSIR, Government of India
13:00	Close

About the SANKALP Initiative

The SANKALP Lecture Series (Synergy for Advanced Networks, Knowledge, and Academia–Industry Learning Progress) brings together leading practitioners, scientists, and innovators to share the human stories behind major technology journeys across Asia and the Pacific from the laboratory to large-scale application. It is designed to inform and inspire policymakers, researchers, technology transfer professionals, entrepreneurs, and the next generation of scientists and engineers in equal measure.

Speaker's Profile

Dr. S. Somanath

Distinguished Scientist and former Secretary, Department of Space; Chairman, Space Commission; and Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (January 2022 – January 2025). Currently Vikram Sarabhai Distinguished Professor at ISRO.

With nearly 40 years in space technology and launch vehicle systems engineering, Dr. Somanath is among the principal architects of India's modern space programme. As ISRO Chairman, he piloted the National Space Policy, drove private sector and startup engagement in the space economy, and oversaw the commercial activities of New Space India Limited (NSIL). Key missions under his leadership include Chandrayaan-3 (first lunar south pole landing), Aditya-L1, XPoSat, INSAT-3DS, NVS-01, SpaDeX, the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), the Re-usable Launch Vehicle Landing Experiment (RLV-LEX), the Gaganyaan Test Vehicle abort demonstration, commercial PSLV and LVM3-OneWeb launches, and Space Vision-2047.

Earlier roles include Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (2018–21), overseeing LVM3, Chandrayaan-2, and Gaganyaan systems; Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (2015–18), completing the C25 cryogenic engine and conducting India's first electric propulsion launch on GSAT; and Project Director for the LVM3-X/CARE crew module atmospheric re-entry experiment (2014). He began his career as a project manager and integration engineer on PSLV.

Education: B.E. (Mechanical Engineering), TKM College of Engineering; M.E. (Aerospace, Gold Medallist), Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; Ph.D., Indian Institute of Technology Madras; honorary doctorates from more than a dozen universities. Fellow of INAE, INSA, AeSI, and ASI; Member, International Academy of Astronautics; IAF Hall of Fame; National Aeronautics Prize; Space Gold Medal (ASI); Distinguished Alumni of IISc and IIT Madras; former Vice President, International Astronautical Federation; delegate to UN-COPUOS.

Moderator's Profile

Dr. Dinesh C. Sharma

Award-winning journalist, author, and science communicator. Author, Space: The India Story.

Dinesh C. Sharma is an award-winning journalist and author based in New Delhi, with a career spanning close to four decades covering science and technology, climate change, health, environment, and innovation for Indian and global media, including The Lancet and Wired. He was previously science editor at Mail Today and managing editor at India Science Wire. In 2008, he joined an international scientific expedition to the Arctic to report on climate change.

He is the author of the national bestseller *Indian Innovation, Not Jugaad*. His book *The Outsourcer: The Story of India's IT Revolution* was awarded the Computer History Museum Book Prize in 2016. His most recent book is *Beyond Biryani: The Making of a Globalised Hyderabad*. Sharma has been a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow and visiting faculty at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and at Ateneo de Manila University, Manila.
