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CENTRE OF
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BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Connecting Entrepreneurs, Investors & Innovators

EVENT REPORT: INAUGURAL TOWN HALL SESSION



31 JULY 2026



19:00 – 20:00 HRS



EMBASSY OF INDIA,
KATHMANDU

ORGANISED BY:



IN-SPAN
CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE

CO-ORGANISED WITH:

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THINK TANK & GRADUATE SCHOOL

SUPPORTED BY:



भारतीय राजदूतावास
काठमांडू, नेपाल
Embassy of India
Kathmandu, Nepal



Connecting Entrepreneurs, Investors & Innovators

Event Report: Inaugural Town Hall Session

31 July 2026 | 19:00 – 20:00 hrs

Embassy of India, Kathmandu

Organisers:

IN-SPAN Center of Excellence

Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA)

Supported by: Embassy of India, Kathmandu

Executive Summary

On 31 July 2026, the inaugural edition of Beyond Boundaries a flagship monthly town hall platform co-organised by the IN-SPAN Center of Excellence and the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA), with the support of the Embassy of India, Kathmandu was held at the Embassy of India in Kathmandu. The event brought together entrepreneurs, investors, innovators, policymakers, and industry leaders for an evening of authentic dialogue on building world-class companies from Nepal.

The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Guruprasad Mudlapur, President of the Bosch Group in India and Managing Director of Bosch Limited, on the topic **“From Startup to Scale-up: Building World-Class Companies”** Drawing on decades of experience at Bosch and the real-world case study of SunMobility a Bosch-invested startup that survived near-collapse during COVID to reach a valuation of nearly half a billion dollars Mr. Mudlapur offered a structured framework for scaling ventures, emphasising the primacy of core intellectual property, the necessity of moving from enthusiasm-driven execution to structured gating processes, and the critical role of delegation and people assessment at each growth phase.

The question-and-answer session with participants, moderated by Mr. Dilip Bhattarai, featured seven substantive questions from entrepreneurs across manufacturing, aerospace, AI and healthcare hardware, IoT, fintech, and natural products. Key themes that emerged included: the importance of overcoming self-imposed mental boundaries in his words handicapped thinking, the irrelevance of geographic location when core IP and unit economics are strong, the accessibility of India’s startup ecosystem (IIT Madras, Bangalore, INSPACe) as a springboard for Nepali ventures, and the openness of Bosch’s published search fields to startups irrespective of geography.

Despite a rainy Kathmandu evening, attendance remained strong and the discussion was vibrant, confirming both the demand for such a platform and the resonance of its founding premise: that the most important boundaries to transcend are not national borders but the self-imposed limits on what can be built from Nepal.

Event Overview

Background and Context

Beyond Boundaries is conceived as a monthly platform that brings the people building Nepal and India's entrepreneurial economy into direct conversation. Each edition features one entrepreneur,



innovator, or ecosystem leader who shares the story of their journey in their own voice: how the idea began, where they struggled, how they responded to failure, and what they see as the next frontier. The platform is created to address a gap identified by both IN-SPAN and AIDIA: existing conferences, pitch events, and award ceremonies rarely give a single builder the space and time to explain the full depth of their journey, including the difficult periods that contain the most valuable lessons for emerging entrepreneurs.

The inaugural edition on 31 July 2026 marked the formal launch of this platform. It was held at the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, a venue that symbolises the bilateral partnership between India and Nepal that underpins the initiative. The event was co-organised by IN-SPAN Center of Excellence and AIDIA, with the Embassy of India serving as host and supporter. This first session set the tone for the series by featuring a keynote speaker of exceptional calibre Mr. Guruprasad Mudlapur, and by demonstrating the appetite for honest, practical dialogue among Nepal's startup community.

Organising Institutions

Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA)

The Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA) is a think tank and graduate school dedicated to research and dialogue on foreign policy, geopolitics, economy, trade, energy, and security. It promotes Track II diplomacy, youth involvement, and international cooperation. AIDIA encourages meaningful interactions among policymakers, experts, and emerging leaders worldwide through research, dialogue, and engagement, supported by policy development and partnerships.



Founded in 2014, AIDIA was created as a think tank with the goal of becoming a centre of excellence by offering a platform for innovative ideas that foster highly intellectual solutions to major national and international challenges.

AIDIA, as a graduate school, strives to connect scholarship with practical statecraft. Our faculty includes academics and practitioners such as former diplomats, policy advisors, and strategic analysts, all of whom have firsthand experience from the corridors of power across South Asia, ASEAN, and beyond.

Situated in Nepal, at the nexus of the Himalayas and between two emerging powers, AIDIA provides a unique perspective on the evolving landscape of the Asian century. Nepal's strategic location as a connector between India and China, along with its rich diplomatic history and increasing regional connectivity, makes it an excellent case for exploring diplomacy, strategic issues, geopolitics, and geoeconomics, including psychogeography.

IN-SPAN Center of Excellence

The IN-SPAN Center of Excellence is a permanent bilateral innovation bridge that translates the momentum of the India-Nepal Startup Partnership Network (IN-SPAN) into scalable venture



development, technical capacity, and regional economic growth. The Center was established by alumni of the first IN-SPAN cohort, demonstrating how an eight-week incubation programme at IIT Madras evolved into a lasting institutional framework for cross-border collaboration. The Center held its first Board Meeting on 9 July 2026, with a nine-member executive board formally in place.

The Center's vision is to build a self-sustaining bilateral startup and innovation ecosystem anchored in Nepal, where founders, researchers, and institutions from Nepal and India collaborate to create scalable ventures, deploy real-world innovation, and contribute to regional economic growth. Its core objectives include institutionalising outcomes into a durable partnership framework, strengthening collaboration between India and Nepal's business and engineering minds, extending technical access to state-of-the-art laboratories and supercomputing centres, delivering incubation support with customised playbooks, triggering sector-focused innovation in deep-tech, agritech, clean energy, and health-tech, bridging research hubs like IITM Pravartak with Nepal's engineering colleges, and building long-term sustainability through an endowment-backed funding structure.

On 14 July 2026, IN-SPAN Center of Excellence and AIDIA formalised a strategic partnership to advance Nepal's innovation economy. Within the Beyond Boundaries programme, IN-SPAN CoE is responsible for nominating guests, connecting the programme with Nepali and Indian startup networks, facilitating investor and incubator participation, and supporting follow-up collaboration.

Embassy of India, Kathmandu

The Embassy of India in Kathmandu serves as the host and supporter of the Beyond Boundaries programme. The Embassy has played a pivotal role in the India-Nepal Startup Partnership Network (IN-SPAN) initiative, collaborating with IIT Madras (Pravartak) to offer



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Nepali startups an eight-week fully funded programme of incubation, mentorship, and technical training at IIT Madras. The first cohort of nine Nepali startups received incubation support, and their alumni went on to establish the IN-SPAN Center of Excellence. The second cohort, with 25 Nepali startups, was launched ahead of schedule on 1 June 2026 and completed the programme on the day of this event.

Within the Beyond Boundaries programme, the Embassy provides the venue, institutional and logistical support, facilitates Indian speakers and ecosystem connections, and advises on protocol and access. The Embassy's Commerce Wing also supports broader India-Nepal economic engagement, including the India-Nepal Startup Partnership Network and business climate surveys for Indian companies in Nepal.

Session Proceedings

Welcome Remarks Shreeyanch Shrestha



Shreeyanch Shrestha, General Secretary of the IN-SPAN Center of Excellence, opened the proceedings with welcome remarks that framed the central theme of the platform. A computer science engineer by profession and mindset, Mr. Shrestha articulated a vision that went beyond conventional entrepreneurial rhetoric.

Mr. Shrestha reframed the concept of “beyond boundaries” not as a reference to borders between nations, but as a challenge to the self-imposed boundaries that limit entrepreneurial ambition. He identified the common limiting beliefs that constrain Nepal’s founders: the voice that says “I am too young,” “I don’t have enough experience,” “this idea isn’t quite ready,” and perhaps the most damaging of all “world-class companies cannot be built from here, from Nepal.” He argued that every breakthrough begins the moment someone decides to challenge those beliefs, not with certainty but with courage, not with perfection but with action.

He emphasised that this was not just another event but the first-ever IN-SPAN town hall meeting, and expressed the hope that it would become a community where conversations spark ideas, ideas become startups, and startups create meaningful impact for Nepal, India, and beyond.

“I believe in change. Change not in the future but now.”

“Every breakthrough begins the moment someone decides to challenge those beliefs, not with certainty but with courage, not with perfection but with action. That is what entrepreneurship means to me.”

Opening Remarks Ms. Garima Nautiyal

Garima Nautiyal Second Secretary at the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, delivered the opening remarks.



Ms. Nautiyal outlined the India-Nepal Startup Partnership Network (IN-SPAN) programme's remarkable trajectory: initiated by the Embassy of India in collaboration with IIT Madras (Pravartak), the programme offers Nepali startups an eight-week fully funded residential incubation experience. The first cohort of nine Nepali startups received incubation support from the IIT Madras Incubation Cell and IITM Pravartak, and the alumni of that cohort went on to establish the IN-SPAN Center of Excellence a clear demonstration that the eight-week programme has evolved into a lasting platform for collaboration between the startup ecosystems of India and Nepal.

The second cohort, with 25 Nepali startups, was launched ahead of schedule on 1 June 2026 and completed the programme at IIT Madras on the very day of the town hall. Ms. Nautiyal highlighted the expanding partnership areas between India and Nepal, including artificial intelligence and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and emphasised the importance of bringing together government, academia, industry, and startups. She welcomed Mr. Guruprasad Mudlapur as the keynote speaker and issued a clear call for the continuity of the platform: that this should not be just the first and only town hall, but a series that continues in the coming months and beyond.

"What began as an 8-week program has evolved into a lasting platform for collaboration between the startup ecosystems of India and Nepal."

"Let this not be just the first and the only one. Let this be a series of town halls that keep happening in the coming period."

Keynote Address Guruprasad Mudlapur

Mr. Guruprasad Mudlapur, President of the Bosch Group in India and Managing Director of Bosch Limited, delivered the keynote address on the topic *"From Startup to Scale-up: Building World-Class Companies."*

Mr. Mudlapur opened with candour and warmth and calibrated the audience by asking how many were in startups, and when a fair number raised their hands, he positioned his value proposition clearly: his experience was more relevant to scaling than to starting, and that was the perspective he would bring.

The Airplane Analogy: Building While Flying

Mr. Mudlapur introduced a powerful metaphor for the startup journey: it is like building an airplane while you are still flying it. In the beginning, the only imperative is to get airborne nobody cares about an airplane on the ground. But quickly, the founder realises that just “economic class” will not suffice; the aircraft needs business class, first class, and increasingly sophisticated systems. In the earliest phases, founders do virtually everything from being the office boy to the chief engineer, architect, marketing person, and finance manager. This is necessary but not sustainable.



Delegation: The First Critical Shift

The first structural shift a startup must navigate is delegation: moving from a small core group doing everything to a larger, delegated group with multiple specialised functions. This delegation is essential for the startup to assess its environment, process market inputs, and plan for larger scale. At Bosch, Mr. Mudlapur explained, small cohorts work tightly together to get through innovation gates, and once an idea passes those gates, it gets delegated to a larger group of specialists who take it through subsequent phases.

From Enthusiasm to Structure: Bosch Innovation Gates

A central message of the keynote was that enthusiasm alone will not carry a startup to a marketable, large-scale product or solution. At some point, the founder must shift from enthusiasm-driven execution to a structured phase with multiple gates and funding rounds. Bosch employs a rigorous gating framework comprising innovation gates, engineering gates, and product development gates. At each gate, the team must assess whether to refine the product, target a specific geography, fund in a certain direction, pivot if necessary, or take a detour. A complete funding structure is well established from the seed stage through to manufacturing readiness.

For products requiring manufacturing such as automotive components or autonomous driving systems quality gates are equally essential. These address questions of required

investment, capital expenditure planning, and ensuring the product is built to last, particularly where safety implications are high.

Founders May Not Be the Right People to Scale

Mr. Mudlapur offered a sobering observation: a lot of times, the founders are probably not even the right people to scale the company. Scaling requires a very different mindset compared to idea-driven conceptualisation. At Bosch, careful assessment is made at each phase to ensure that the right people are behind the initiative. People assessment, he argued, is as important as technology and intellectual property.

“A lot of times the founders are probably not even the right guys to scale, and that’s another thing we carefully look at are these the right people to scale?”

The SunMobility Case Study

Mr. Mudlapur presented the case study of SunMobility, a Bosch-invested startup in battery swapping technology for electric vehicles. Bosch invested because of the core technology they could provide: a battery with longer life through multiple cycles of charging, making the swappable battery system exceptionally cost-effective.

The company faced an existential crisis when COVID-19 hit. There was a point when the company was not looking at turning on lights the next day it was that dire. What saved the company was the founder’s conviction, the strength of the core IP, and the support of the board. The founder marketed the core IP effectively to investors. After COVID, as ESG and sustainability funds surged, a major oil company invested, followed by Indian Oil, and SunMobility is now at a valuation of nearly half a billion dollars, in its C/D series, pre-IPO.

The key lesson Mr. Mudlapur drew was that the grit of startup founders, the core IP they possess, and the ability to push through the hurdles are what separate survivors from casualties. He was candid about the reality: there have been days of intense fights, intense crying, and intense difficult periods. But that is the phase startups must master to get from where they are to the next level.

“Enthusiasm, purpose and conviction. These are the three ingredients.”

Question-and-Answer Session

The Q&A session was moderated by **Mr. Dilip Bhattarai**, Co-convenor of the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The session featured seven substantive questions from entrepreneurs across diverse sectors, reflecting the breadth of Nepal’s startup landscape.



Q1: Self-Sustaining Strategies for Nepal

Kushal Achhami (six years in entrepreneurship, manufacturing and nonprofit) asked how Nepal, being import-dependent, can identify markets for self-sustaining and compete with India in creating a local economy with jobs.



Mr. Mudlapur identified self-imposed handicaps as the primary barrier, noting that he sees this playing out extensively in Nepal the belief that “we don’t know how to compete.” He argued that the startup world is hard everywhere, whether in Nepal or Bangalore, and

offered three key frameworks for scaling from any location: (1) Core IP do you have intellectual property to protect, develop, and drive? (2) Unit Economics does your unit economics sustain? (3) Network Effects can you create network effects quickly, as exemplified by Swiggy and Zomato? He asserted that sitting in Nepal should not be a disadvantage if these three elements are in place, and that India is also an excellent market for Nepali startups.

Q2: Passion vs. Purpose and Hardware/Drones

David Ramovich Mandal asked whether founders should focus on passion (interest in a field) or purpose (solving a big problem), and sought advice for someone starting in hardware drones, UAVs, and space.

Mr. Mudlapur's framework was explicit: look at what problem you are solving first, then find purpose in that problem, and apply your passion towards solving it better than anyone else. For hardware startups, he recommended a stack analysis of the complete solution: identify where you fit best with your competence. If hardware is your specialty, that becomes your core IP and control point; if not, make hardware a commodity and locate your IP at a different layer of the stack.



Q3: Bosch Manufacturing Support and Healthcare Market

Sachin Udas (AI company working on healthcare hardware for the “global south”) asked whether Bosch does manufacturing for startups, and about the market potential in the northern belt of India (UP/Bihar).



Mr. Mudlapur explained that Bosch has all capabilities to help build hardware but questioned whether Bosch is the right partner for every stage. For testing the market with the first 500 units, more agile companies may be better. Bosch can be slower and does not want to be a contract manufacturer. He introduced the concept of Bosch Search Fields: Bosch

openly publishes its areas of strategic interest, and if a startup's idea fits a search field, Bosch commits resources, budget, capabilities, and scaling abilities. Crucially, these search fields have no geographic boundaries. Nepal is absolutely not excluded.

Q4: Space Tech Startup and People Management

Rubita Magar, co-founder of **Mac 24 Orbitals** Nepal's first launch vehicle company, building hybrid propulsion technology asked about people management and scaling from Nepal without policy, deep tech ecosystem, funding, or manufacturing support.



Mr. Mudlapur acknowledged that space is one of the most difficult areas for a startup. He credited ISRO for India's space tech achievements and offered to personally connect the founders with Mr. Pawan Goenka, Chairman of INSPACe, who promoted the Indian space startups that have now reached orbit. On people management, his advice was to hire a group

of experts and let them thrive: the leader's job is not to be an expert but to ensure that purpose is lived every day, to give tips but not to constantly monitor or guide out of ego.

"My job is not to be an expert. My job is to let the experts thrive. So my job is basically to clean the pipe."

Q5: How Large Companies Perceive Startups

Dilip Nepali (commercial banking, exploring fintech) asked how large companies perceive startups: whether they want to acquire and eliminate competition, or support and then acquire.



Mr. Mudlapur's response was direct: not to care what others think. Startups are driven by purpose to solve a problem; focus on that. Approximately 80% of founders want to exit at a certain point, and 20% want to carry forward and scale. He warned that there may be sharks who want to swallow a startup at a very low price, and advised founders to protect their interests first before seeking the next level.

Q6: Product Quality Without Supporting Ecosystem

Giri Raj Timilsina, co-founder of **Pluto Systems** (IoT-based control systems and data acquisition), asked how to ensure build quality and aesthetics when lacking supporting industry, building at low scale, and facing import constraints.



Mr. Mudlapur acknowledged this as a genuine problem, noting that even India struggles with quality manufacturing despite strong prototyping capabilities. He highlighted that international options exist: Bosch maintains a database of international facilities and helps startup companies access them. Nepal may not have the infrastructure, and it may be necessary to go out and get it from wherever it is best suited.

Q7: Investor Signals and R&D vs. Sales Focus

Sushma P, co-founder of **Eco Revive Research and Innovation** (personal care products from underutilised Nepali herbs), asked what signals convince investors that a startup with strong technology and heavy R&D is ready for scale, and when founders should shift from optimising products to focusing on sales and distribution.



Mr. Mudlapur explained that investor perspectives vary: some invest based on core IP and stay for the long run, while others look for ideas that can build network effects quickly. He advised startups to project their timeline clearly for instance, “this will take three years to mature and I need this level of funding.” Early-stage investors typically seek a 10x return, while later-stage investors may stay until IPO. Founder conviction is the key differentiator. He observed that if you talk to ten investors, you may reject five and five may reject you, but eventually you will be left with a narrow set with whom productive conversation is possible.

Final Question: Bosch CSR for Nepal Startups

Mr. Dilip Bhattarai concluded the Q&A by asking whether Bosch could develop a startup support initiative through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme in Nepal, given that Bosch now has a country office.



Mr. Mudlapur confirmed that Bosch can absolutely support, but cautioned against mixing CSR with startup activity. CSR is for social causes, while startup incubation is a separate path with a better chance of success. He then delivered what became one of the most discussed messages of the evening: he sees a bit of handicapped thinking in Nepal and urged the audience to come out of that mindset. Every country has multiple levels of development, and in India, good ideas first incubate in Bangalore or similar hubs, then scale from wherever. For Nepal, connected with IIT Chennai and able to incubate in Bangalore, this approach is very accessible. Think of anything that gets your idea started that is when you can test and take it to the next level.

“I see a bit of handicapped thinking in Nepal. I would first urge you to come out of that.”

Closing Remarks

Ms. Sajina Rai, Program Director at AIDIA, delivered the closing remarks. She expressed gratitude to Mr. Guruprasad Mudlapur for sharing his experience and insights on how startups should start, move on, and scale up, and thanked the Embassy of India for its invaluable support in making the event possible.



Ms. Rai acknowledged the audience’s active participation and enthusiasm, which had made the discussion vibrant and meaningful. She expressed the hope that everyone had something to take away from the session and would be inspired to think beyond conventional boundaries and pursue innovation with resilience and purpose. Looking forward, she emphasised that together, the community continues to build a platform that learns, collaborates, and looks beyond boundaries toward new ideas, stronger partnerships, and shared opportunities, and that the organisers look forward to welcoming participants to learn from inspiring leaders in future sessions.



Sajina Rai, Program Director, AIDIA and Kavita Bhandari, Research Assistant, AIDIA presented the token of appreciation to the keynote speaker. The event concluded with a group photograph.



Key Takeaways and Insights

The inaugural Beyond Boundaries town hall generated a rich set of insights for Nepal’s startup ecosystem. The following key takeaways emerged from both the keynote address and the audience Q&A:

#	Takeaway	Details
1	Core IP is the Anchor	Without differentiated intellectual property, a startup is just one of many ideas. Core IP protects, drives value, and sustains through crises as demonstrated by SunMobility’s survival during COVID.
2	Unit Economics + Network Effects = Scale	These two factors determine whether geographic location matters. With strong unit economics and the ability to build network effects, sitting in Nepal is not a disadvantage.
3	Problem First, Then Purpose, Then Passion	Entrepreneurship should begin with identifying a core problem to solve. Purpose is found in the problem, and passion is applied to execute better than anyone else.

#	Takeaway	Details
4	Enthusiasm Must Give Way to Structure	Enthusiasm starts the journey, but structured gating processes, delegation, and people assessment are what create scalable companies.
5	Handicapped Thinking is the Real Barrier	Self-imposed limitations and an inferiority complex about being from a small country are bigger barriers than missing ecosystem infrastructure.
6	Use India's Ecosystem as a Springboard	India's startup infrastructure IIT Madras, Bangalore's deep-tech VCs, ISRO, INSPACe is accessible to Nepali startups and should be leveraged.
7	Bosch Search Fields are Open to Nepal	Bosch openly publishes its strategic search fields and invites startups to participate. Geography is not a boundary Nepal is explicitly included.
8	People Management = Let Experts Thrive	The leader's job is not to be the expert but to ensure purpose is lived every day and to let experts play their roles.
9	Investors Seek 10x (Early Stage) or IPO (Later Stage)	Founder conviction is the key differentiator. Startups should project timelines clearly and recognise that finding the right investor is a narrowing process.



Appendix A: Speaker Profiles

Name	Designation	Role at Event
Kavita Bhandari	Research Assistant	MC/Host
Shreeyanch Shrestha	General Secretary, IN-SPAN Center of Excellence	Welcome Remarks
Garima Nautyal	Second Secretary, Embassy of India, Kathmandu	Opening Remarks (on behalf of Suman Shekhar)
Guruprasad Mudlapur	President, Bosch Group in India & Managing Director, Bosch Limited	Keynote Speaker
Dilip Bhattarai	Co-convener, Nepal India Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Q&A Moderator
Sajina Rai	Program Director, AIDIA	Thank You Note and Closing Remarks