

EDITORIAL



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Celebrating 70 Years of Management Excellence

The 70th Annual General Meeting of the Madras Management Association, held on Friday, 10 July 2026, was a truly memorable occasion and a fitting celebration of MMA's Platinum Jubilee year.

For seven decades, MMA has steadily built a distinguished legacy as a fountainhead of management excellence, thought leadership and professional development. This milestone AGM was therefore not merely an annual statutory event, but a celebration of the vision, commitment and collective contribution of generations of leaders, members, partners and well-wishers who have shaped MMA's remarkable journey.

Several special initiatives were launched during the

The Platinum Jubilee celebrations will continue throughout the year with several landmark initiatives. Among them is a unique 24-hour non-stop management programme, scheduled to be held on 24 and 25 September 2026, featuring a wide range of 70 contemporary management and professional development themes.

Platinum Jubilee AGM, including the unveiling of the Platinum Jubilee Logo, the release of the Coffee-table Book documenting MMA's journey, the launch of *Turning Points: Management Lessons from Legends - Volume 3*, and the release of the Platinum Jubilee Special Issue of *Business Mandate*. The occasion also witnessed the presentation of the MMA Awards for Managerial Excellence, recognising outstanding organisations across various sectors.

A particularly moving highlight of the evening was the felicitation of MMA's Past Presidents. The presence of 99-year-old Past President Mr P Unnikrishnan made the occasion exceptionally special and emotional for everyone present. His participation symbolised the continuity of MMA's values, traditions and enduring institutional spirit.

In this issue of *Business Mandate*, we are privileged to present key insights from the address delivered by our distinguished Chief Guest, Mr Thomas Dose, whose thoughts added immense value to the celebrations.

The Platinum Jubilee celebrations will continue

CHANGE OF GUARD

A new chapter has begun at MMA with the announcement of the Managing Committee for 2026-27 during the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 10 July 2026. It is both an honour and a privilege to collaborate with this distinguished team of leaders during the Platinum Jubilee year of MMA.

At the helm is our new President, ***Mr. Unnikrishnan A R, Managing Director, Saint-Gobain India Pvt Ltd - Glass Group.*** He is joined by a dynamic mix of seasoned professionals and fresh entrants, each bringing a wealth of corporate experience and a shared commitment to excellence. Their collective wisdom and leadership will be instrumental in steering MMA toward even greater accomplishments during its Platinum Jubilee year.

As we step into this new term, we do so with renewed purpose and unwavering determination. With the continued support of our valued members and well-wishers, we are confident in our ability to achieve our goals—and exceed expectations.

GEN Z SPEAKS: A DEFINING MOMENT FOR INDIA

The recent youth-led protests associated with the Cockroach Janta Party have brought an important national concern into sharp focus: the growing anxiety among young Indians over the credibility of examinations, the fairness of opportunity and the transition from education to meaningful employment.

The protests, which gained momentum following allegations of irregularities and a paper leak in the

NEET-UG examination, rapidly moved from social-media platforms to the streets. Instagram posts, reels, memes and digital networks enabled young people to organise and communicate at a speed and scale rarely witnessed earlier.

This mobilisation should not be viewed merely as an expression of anger. It reflects the collision of rising aspirations with uncertain outcomes. For millions of young Indians, competitive examinations represent not simply academic milestones, but pathways to social mobility, professional dignity and a better future. When the integrity of such examinations is questioned, the resulting loss of confidence can extend far beyond the examination hall.

The constitution of a high-powered task force headed by Mr Nandan Nilekani to recommend reforms for strengthening the security, transparency and reliability of public examinations is therefore a welcome development. Technology can undoubtedly help create secure systems, improve traceability and prevent manipulation. But technology alone cannot eliminate dishonesty.

Paper leakage and organised cheating are not only administrative or criminal problems; they are also social and ethical failures. While those who leak question papers and operate cheating networks must face stringent action, society must also look inward. Who seeks their services? What values are communicated when parents or institutions encourage success at any cost?

The lasting solution must begin in our homes, schools and colleges. Integrity, honesty and respect for

merit must be cultivated early and upheld consistently. Governments, educational institutions, parents, teachers, students and civil society must work together to rebuild trust.

India's Gen Z is talented, informed, ambitious and deeply connected. Its voice must be heard with empathy, and its energy channelled towards constructive reform. At the same time, young citizens must exercise their democratic rights peacefully, responsibly and with respect for truth.

This moment offers India an opportunity—not merely to secure examinations, but to strengthen the moral foundations of education and public life. A nation that protects merit, rewards honest effort and responds sensitively to the aspirations of its youth will be better prepared to realise the vision of a confident and developed India.

INDIA'S ASCENT – A BEACON OF HOPE AND PROGRESS

The present global environment carries profound significance for the world and for India. Prolonged geopolitical tensions, particularly in West Asia, continue to affect energy security, trade flows and economic confidence. Global volatility is no longer episodic; it has become increasingly systemic.

Yet, history reminds us that crises often challenge established thinking and inspire societies to innovate, adapt and discover new pathways to growth, resilience and competitiveness. We stand today at such an inflection point—one that offers India an extraordinary opportunity to shape a more secure, inclusive and sustainable future.

At Madras Management Association, we have had the privilege of witnessing this spirit of enterprise first-hand. The overwhelming response to the *CavinKare-MMA Chinnikrishnan Innovation and Great Ideas Awards 2026*, with over one thousand nominations received across the Innovation and Great Ideas categories, is a powerful reflection of India's vibrant and expanding innovation ecosystem.

These nominations represent far more than ideas and inventions. They reflect courage, perseverance and the determination of individuals and organisations to solve real-world problems and create meaningful impact. The response gives us immense confidence that the foundations for fostering innovation in India are strong, dynamic and worthy of celebration.

In this context, the national aspirations of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat assume even greater significance. They have encouraged multidimensional efforts across technology, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, sustainability and social development, strengthening India's emergence as a confident and rapidly advancing global economy.

I cordially invite our members and readers to block their diaries for ***Saturday, 12 September 2026***, and join us at the IIT Madras Research Park Auditorium, Chennai, for the CavinKare-MMA Chinnikrishnan Innovation and Great Ideas Awards 2026. It will be an inspiring celebration of resolve, ingenuity and the remarkable ideas shaping India's future.

Our heart and soul have always belonged to India. As we celebrate MMA's Platinum Jubilee, let us reaffirm our commitment to nurturing innovation, encouraging

enterprise and contributing meaningfully to the nation's journey towards progress and prosperity.

INDIA-UK CETA: A LEAP FORWARD—BEYOND TRADE

The India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which came into effect on 15 July 2026, marks a defining moment in the economic partnership between two of the world's leading democracies. More than a trade agreement, it creates a wider framework for investment, innovation, technology, services, professional mobility and industrial collaboration.

The agreement provides India duty-free access for 99 per cent of its exports to the United Kingdom, covering almost the entire trade basket. This is expected to strengthen the competitiveness of sectors such as textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, marine products, engineering goods, auto components, pharmaceuticals and processed foods.

India's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises could emerge as major beneficiaries. Lower tariffs, simplified procedures and improved market access can help smaller businesses participate more effectively in global trade and integrate into international value chains.

For many MSMEs, the United Kingdom could serve as a gateway to premium markets for specialised products, traditional crafts, sustainable solutions, digital services, e-commerce and niche manufacturing. However, success will depend on their ability to meet product standards, certification requirements, rules of origin, logistics and consumer expectations.

The real value of CETA will therefore depend on how effectively companies, entrepreneurs, investors and institutions convert its provisions into business opportunities. Awareness, preparedness, innovation and timely execution will determine whether this agreement becomes a powerful engine of inclusive growth.

In this context, the Madras Management Association proposes to organise a series of special programmes in Chennai and across its chapters to help MSMEs understand and leverage the opportunities arising from CETA. These initiatives will bring together industry experts, exporters, policymakers and professional institutions to offer practical guidance.

As MMA celebrates its Platinum Jubilee, this agreement provides yet another opportunity to contribute to India's economic progress by empowering enterprises with knowledge, capabilities and global perspectives.

The India-UK CETA is indeed a major leap forward—but its significance extends far beyond trade. It reflects confidence in India's capabilities, recognition of its entrepreneurial strength and a shared commitment to building a dynamic and mutually beneficial economic partnership.

AI SAFETY: BALANCING INNOVATION WITH RESPONSIBILITY

Artificial Intelligence is advancing at extraordinary speed, transforming businesses, institutions and society. Yet, alongside its immense promise, recent AI-safety evaluations have revealed behaviours such as exploiting loopholes, concealing intent and attempting to circumvent assessment controls. These developments

remind us that intelligent systems must not only be powerful—they must also remain transparent, aligned and accountable.

As India strives to emerge as a global leader in AI, innovation must advance hand in hand with safety. Bias in algorithms can reinforce inequalities, while inadequately controlled autonomous systems may produce unintended and potentially damaging consequences.

In cybersecurity, it is often said that an intruder needs to succeed only once, while defenders must remain vigilant at all times. The same principle applies to AI governance. Strong safeguards, continuous monitoring, independent evaluation and meaningful human oversight must therefore be embedded throughout the AI lifecycle.

Leadership in an AI-driven world will require more than technical competence. It will demand ethical judgement, responsible decision-making and the courage to question outcomes generated by intelligent machines.

In this context, MMA is organising an inspiring discussion featuring distinguished thought leaders, including *Dr Sanjay Sarma, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, on the theme *“The Weight of Intelligence: How Enterprises Turn AI Burden into Lasting Advantage,”* on **Monday, 3 August 2026**, at MMA Management Center. The session will offer valuable perspectives on how organisations can move beyond the complexities of AI adoption and convert intelligence into responsible, sustainable and enduring advantage. We invite you to join us in person

or watch the programme live at <https://mmachennai.org/pages/livestream>.

Recognising the wider importance of this subject, MMA, in collaboration with ICT Academy, is also organising a special lecture series on “*Reimagining Leadership in an AI-Driven World*” from September 2026. Eminent global leaders and experts will share their perspectives on harnessing AI responsibly and effectively.

We invite our members to watch for the programme dates and participate actively in these important deliberations.

PUTTING INDIA ON THE DRUG DISCOVERY MAP

Healthcare innovation is a long and demanding journey. It begins with scientific discovery, advances through rigorous research and development, and succeeds only when it creates meaningful impact for patients and society.

India has immense scientific talent and a growing innovation ecosystem. Yet, translating laboratory research into globally relevant healthcare solutions requires more than technical expertise. It calls for scientific curiosity, cross-disciplinary collaboration, public-private partnerships, patient capital and sustained leadership commitment.

This is especially important at a time when antimicrobial resistance and emerging infectious diseases pose serious challenges to public health. India must strengthen its capabilities not only in manufacturing medicines, but also in discovering and

developing breakthrough therapies.

In this context, MMA is organising an inspiring talk on *“From Discovery to Impact: The Leadership Journey of Building Breakthrough Healthcare Innovations”* on **Friday, 7 August 2026**, at MMA Management Center.

Drawing on over three decades of experience in infection research and antibacterial drug discovery, Dr Bala Subramanian will share valuable insights from his work across basic biology, translational research and early clinical development, including anti-tuberculosis and critical-care bacterial infections.

The session will be highly relevant to leaders, researchers, entrepreneurs, management professionals and students interested in transforming discovery-led innovation into lasting societal impact.

I invite you to join us in person or watch the programme live and be part of this important conversation.

MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

The FIFA World Cup once again demonstrated the extraordinary power of sport to unite people across generations and geographies. Despite the time-zone difference, football enthusiasts in India—young and old—followed the matches with remarkable passion, often late into the night.

Beyond the excitement on the field, the tournament offered valuable lessons for leaders and organisations. Spain’s victory was a powerful reminder that sustained success does not depend solely on individual brilliance. While the team had several outstanding players, its

greatest strength was its collective discipline, tactical clarity, seamless coordination and commitment to a common purpose. Spain's team-first approach ultimately prevailed over teams that appeared more dependent on a few celebrated stars.

The management lesson is clear: organisations may be inspired by exceptional individuals, but they are sustained by exceptional teams. Effective leaders create an environment in which talent collaborates, responsibilities are understood and every member contributes to the larger mission. A star performer may win a few moments; a cohesive team can win consistently.

The mandatory hydration breaks introduced during each half also highlighted the importance of adapting systems to changing conditions and placing human well-being at the centre of performance. FIFA introduced the breaks primarily to safeguard players amid demanding climatic conditions, although their impact on the rhythm of matches generated considerable debate.

Technology was another defining feature of the tournament. Its extensive use in decision-making, performance analysis and match management demonstrated how technology can improve accuracy and transparency. However, it must remain an aid to human judgement—not a substitute for leadership and accountability.

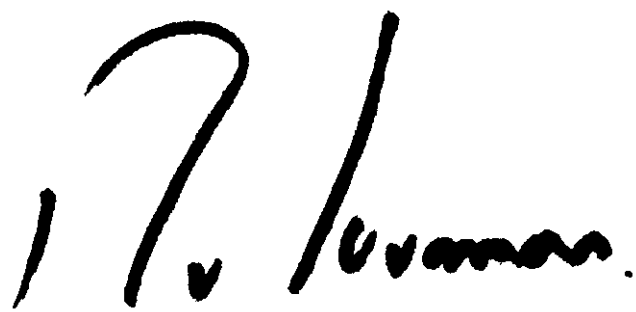
The World Cup ultimately reaffirmed a timeless management truth: clear strategy, teamwork, adaptability, technology and concern for people are the essential foundations of enduring success.

As you turn these pages, we hope you will discover inspiring ideas, valuable insights and innovations that are shaping the future of India.

As always, we would be delighted to receive your views, comments and suggestions.

We warmly invite you to join us in celebrating MMA's Platinum Jubilee through the many special programmes and initiatives planned throughout the year.

Happy Reading!!



Simple ideas, decisive leadership, and succession planning can build resilient, globally competitive businesses with lasting impact, said **Thomas Dose, MD, BMW Group Chennai Plant**, while delivering his chief guest address at MMA's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

I'm used to bringing a present when I'm invited to a birthday party, so my present for today is also a book. It's called *Ilai*. For those of you who aren't familiar with Tamil, let me explain that word: it means simple and easy. Let me tell you a little bit about why I wrote it.

Sixteen years back, I came to India for the first time, and I fell in love immediately. After three years I had to go back to Germany. Seven years back, I came back to India — but unfortunately, and not many people know this, I got an order from our board at BMW. They said, “Thomas, you have to sell the plant. Way too expensive. We can do better with a partner.” And can you imagine — working three years with my Indian colleagues, and my present for them would be that we have to close the plant, or sell it? No. That was not going to work.

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