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OCTOBER 2025



## CAVINKARE-MMA CHINNIKRISHNAN INNOVATION AWARDS 2025

The Award winners with Mr R Dinesh, Chief Guest, Mr C K Ranganathan, Mr Lakshminarayanan Duraiswamy and Gp Capt R Vijayakumar.



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The Madras Management Association has been conferred the prestigious Best Management Association in India Award by the All India Management Association (AIMA) for the year 2024-25

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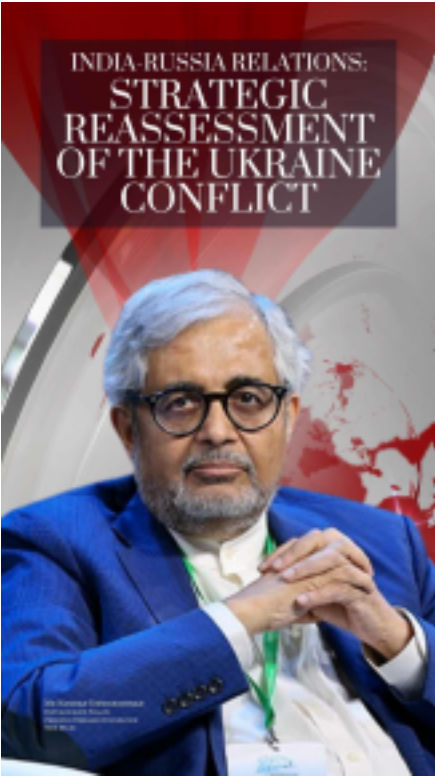
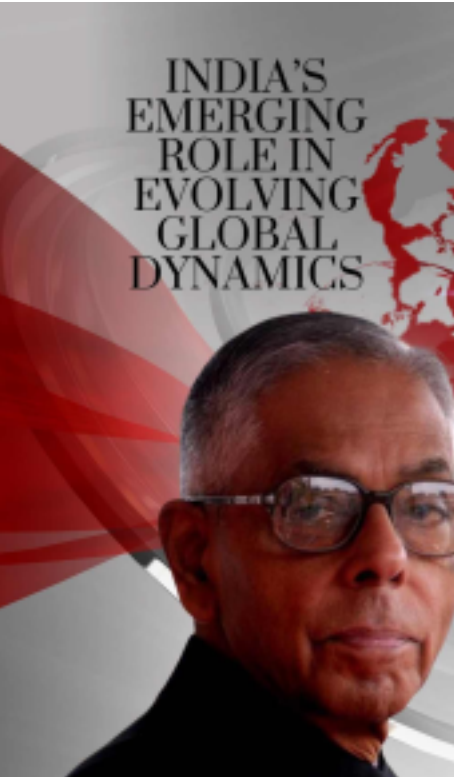
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Gp Capt R Vijayakumar (Retd), VSM

## Fifteen-Time Champions of Excellence

**H**istory was made yet again! The Madras Management Association has been conferred the prestigious Best Management Association in India Award by the All India Management Association (AIMA) for the year 2024-25.

This recognition, presented by ***Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla***, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and Former Foreign Secretary of India, at the valedictory function of the 52nd National Management Convention held at Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi, on 10th September 2025, marks an unparalleled 15th consecutive win for MMA.



Such a consistent record of excellence is rare and remarkable. It reflects MMA's sustained contribution to the management movement in India and sets a benchmark that inspires other management associations across the country.

On behalf of the Managing Committee, the award was received by *Mr. Lakshminarayanan*, President, MMA, *Mr. K. Mahalingam*, Immediate Past President, MMA, and myself, as Executive Director of MMA.

This honour is not just MMA's—it belongs to every member whose unwavering support has made this historic achievement possible. As we celebrate this proud milestone, we also renew our commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and impact—continuing to shape the future of management in India with the same passion and purpose that has brought us here.

### **“CELEBRATING INNOVATION FOR EVERY INDIAN”**

The *CavinKare-MMA ChinniKrishnan Innovation Awards 2025* once again paid tribute to the visionary spirit of Mr. Chinnikrishnan, the pioneer of the Sachet Revolution, who firmly believed that “what the affluent can enjoy, the common man should also be able to afford.” These awards are a fitting memorial to his legacy, celebrating innovations that make a real difference to society.

This year, the response was truly overwhelming, with over 300 nominations pouring in from innovators across the country. After a rigorous process, the awardees were selected by an eminent panel of jury, ensuring that only the most impactful and meaningful innovations were recognized.



The grand award ceremony, held in September 2025 at the IIT Madras Research Park Auditorium, spotlighted three exceptional innovators. These outstanding individuals now stand as the shining jewels in the crown of the ChinniKrishnan Innovation Awards, carrying forward the torch of accessible and inclusive innovation.

In today's rapidly changing world, the need for unwavering focus on innovation has never been greater—especially innovations that bridge divides and make products and services accessible to all.

The Chief Guest, *Mr R Dinesh*, Executive Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solutions Limited, delivered a thought-provoking address on innovation that inspired and ignited new ideas in the minds of all participants. His reflections reminded us that innovation is not only about technology but also about vision, empathy, and inclusivity. I am delighted to present to you the article on Mr. Dinesh's address, which also includes an embedded video for your viewing.

Together, let us continue to champion the spirit of innovation and build a future where ingenuity uplifts every section of society.

Click to watch the video of the grand award function.

## NAVIGATING A FRACTURED WORLD: INDIA'S STRATEGIC POSITION

Protests erupted in Nepal as countless young people descended onto the streets against Kathmandu's ban on several social media platforms for failing to comply with registration requirements. Considering how deeply ingrained platforms like X, Instagram, and WhatsApp are



*On the global stage, multiple flashpoints continue to reshape international dynamics.*

in our daily lives, it seems inconceivable that they could be blocked. Millions remain dependent on foreign-run apps, making any attempt to reverse this reality nearly impossible. The incident highlights a larger truth: people today inherently view the freedom of online speech and association as a civil right.

Meanwhile, on the global stage, multiple flashpoints continue to reshape international dynamics. The unending Ukraine war, the one-sided Gaza conflict, U.S. President Trump's tariff war on various nations, the Saudi-Pakistan Defence pact, and India's evolving strategic challenges collectively signal attempts to rewrite geo-political, geo-economic, and geo-strategic realities.

In this complex context, MMA, in association with Policy Matters and KAS, organised a virtual seminar on *"India's Emerging Role in Evolving Global Dynamics."* The event featured a galaxy of eminent speakers, including **Mr. M K Narayanan**, Former Governor of West Bengal & Former National Security Advisor, who shared valuable perspectives on how India must position itself amidst these turbulent shifts.

I am delighted to present in this issue detailed articles from this seminar, accompanied by embedded videos. I invite you to read, reflect, and watch as we unpack India's role in navigating today's fractured yet opportunity-laden global order.



## **GST 2.0 – BUILDING A ROBUST THE TAX FOUNDATION**

To the credit of the GST Council, this round of reforms did not stop with the elimination of two rate slabs but went deeper, addressing several long-standing structural anomalies within the tax regime. This marks a critical step towards building a more transparent, predictable, and business-friendly taxation system.

But the journey is far from complete. The Council's focus must now expand to other pressing areas — clarifying legislative ambiguities, streamlining input tax credit (ITC) flows, introducing joint or coordinated audits to enhance efficiency, and strengthening dispute settlement mechanisms. Equally important is investing in the training of officers, ensuring that reforms are not just on paper but reflected in consistent and fair implementation.

If these measures are taken up in a time-bound programme, GST 2.0 can become far more than just a reform of rates and procedures. It can serve as the backbone of India's growth strategy, enabling businesses to operate with confidence, boosting investor sentiment, and driving efficiency in the economy.

As India marches toward the ambitious vision of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, GST 2.0 is not merely a fiscal necessity but a strategic reform — one that has the potential to transform India's tax landscape into a true enabler of competitiveness and inclusive growth.

### **AI: HYPE, HOPE, OR HARD REALITY?**

Even as artificial intelligence (AI) has become the ultimate business buzzword, a new survey suggests that



the actual gains from it have been marginal at best. According to the Atlassian 2025 AI Collaboration Index, 96% of the surveyed organizations reported seeing little or no improvement in efficiency, innovation, or work quality.

Interestingly, the survey also highlights India's unique approach: Indians are the least likely to abandon AI if its results fall short. Instead, they are more likely than others to refine prompts, persist, and experiment until they derive value. This resilience suggests that while AI may take time to live up to the hype, India is at no risk of lagging behind other economies in adoption and usage.

It is in this context that the MMA Annual Students' Convention 2025 has chosen the theme: *"Future Ready: Leveraging AI, Agility & Human Skills to Thrive in a Changing World."* The convention aims to bring greater clarity to young minds on AI's role, limitations, and future potential.

My compliments to Convention Chairman **Mr. Manoj Joseph**, Managing Director, Thejo Engineering Ltd., and our knowledge partner EY for putting together an outstanding programme scheduled on Monday, 27th October 2025, at the IIT Research Park Auditorium. With a full house already registered, this promises to be a truly engaging and thought-provoking event. For those unable to attend in person, do make sure to watch it live online.

## **EYES IN THE SKY: SECURING INDIA'S SPACE ASSETS**

Under a global treaty, outer space is meant to remain free of weapons of mass destruction. Yet,



satellites — the silent sentinels orbiting above — have long played a decisive role in military actions on the ground.

This year's India-Pakistan conflict underscored that reality. Data feeds from Indian orbiters provided critical intelligence, enabling Indian forces to strike targets deep inside Pakistani territory. Reports also suggest that our adversary may have relied on Chinese space assets for its operations. In response, India is reportedly planning the deployment of “Bodyguard” satellites to shield existing orbiters from potential threats.

While India enjoys a clear advantage over Pakistan in terms of satellite capability, the larger concern lies in the prospect of intelligence-sharing among multiple adversarial players. In such a scenario, space dominance is not just about superiority but also about survivability.

Nobody expects space to turn into a hot battlefield, but complacency is not an option. As geopolitical rivalries intensify, India must prepare to secure its satellites against emerging threats — ensuring that our “eyes in the sky” remain vigilant, resilient, and beyond the reach of hostile interference.

## **FAMILY OFFICES: GUARDIANS OF WEALTH, CATALYSTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Family offices are fast emerging as the cornerstone of preserving and growing wealth, nurturing entrepreneurship, and strengthening governance in family-owned businesses. As India's business landscape matures, family offices are evolving from being passive wealth managers to becoming active drivers of innovation, investment, and long-term sustainability.



In this context, Great Lakes Institute of Management, in association with Madras Management Association, is hosting a special conclave on 9th October 2025 on the theme “*Creating Entrepreneurial Families – The Role of Family Offices.*” The event will feature **Mr C K Ranganathan**, Chairman & Managing Director, CavinKare Pvt Ltd as the Chief Guest who will share his perspectives on the future and growing importance of family business offices in India.

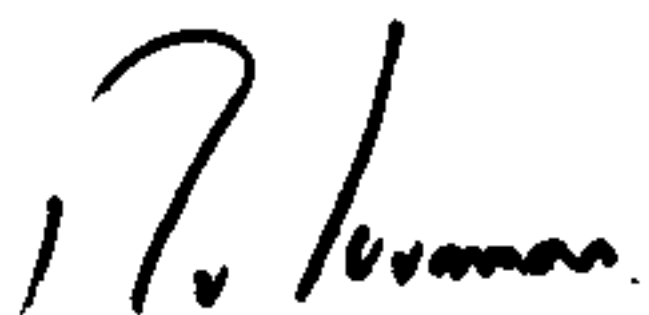
This conclave promises to offer valuable insights for family business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals keen on understanding how family offices can play a transformative role in shaping India’s business and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If you are a part of a family business and would like to know more about this issue, please call **Mr. Sundar** from MMA at 9840123906 to register your participation at the conclave.

I am also delighted to present interesting articles by Dr Srikanth Kondapalli, Ms Indrani Bagchi, Mr Nandan Unnikrishnan and others in this issue for your reading pleasure and inspiration.

As always, we would be happy to hear your views, comments and suggestions.

Happy reading!





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# INDIA'S EMERGING ROLE IN EVOLVING GLOBAL DYNAMICS



**MR M K NARAYANAN**

FORMER GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL &  
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR



Amid shifting geopolitics and global uncertainties, **Mr. M K Narayanan** examines India's evolving role, challenges, and opportunities in shaping world dynamics.

**I**t is some time since I spoke to an elite audience such as this. Also, in the precincts of the Madras Management Association. I have the added pleasure today to speak on a subject of contemporary relevance and importance, 'India's Emerging Role in the Evolving Global Dynamics'.

Let me begin by mentioning certain constants which we cannot ignore. One, that we live in a world wherein uncertainty is the predominant factor. Next, this is a world where we are witnessing constant shifts in geopolitical hegemonies and wide ranging geopolitical tensions. Additionally, a world in which we confront a multitude of disruptive technologies, and wherein economic tsunamis are the order of the day. In short, we live in a world where the 'rules based international order' is being, or has been, replaced by 'shambolic disorder'.

Before I come to India's role, let me briefly survey the world around us. The US, once the leader of the so called 'free world', is today a pale shadow of what it was in 1945 at the end of World War II. Also, once a pillar of democratic stability, the US is today grappling



with profound problems while maintaining the pretension of being the leader of the democratic world. China, the hegemon that the US acutely desires to confront, and possibly eclipse, is meanwhile gaining in strength and importance.

The truth is that the US today has no perceived strategy to deal with a China that is constantly involved in unveiling new global initiatives – the latest being The Global Governance Initiative (GGI) – which lays out China’s plan on how the new global rules are to be written. It is the Fifth in a chain that includes the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Security Initiative. At the foreign policy level, China has meanwhile succeeded in brokering alliances with countries like Russia, attempted to reach a thaw with countries in its vicinity such as India, firmly established its presence in Southeast Asia, and has strengthened its relationship with most countries of Asia and Africa. It also maintains a respectable relationship with much of Europe - mainly by way of trade.



*The situation in West Asia is, if anything, bleaker. Israel with the backing of the US has disregarded all civilizational norms...*

At the other end, Europe's condition today is indeed pathetic. Its inability to come to the aid of Ukraine in the latter's conflict with Russia has exposed its inherent weaknesses. The fact that even with NATO's support, Europe and Ukraine have been unable to withstand Russia reflects the current realities in Europe.

The situation in West Asia is, if anything, bleaker. Israel with the backing of the US has disregarded all civilizational norms and is currently engaged in a virtual genocide of the Palestinian people, specially in Gaza. This, unfortunately, has the implicit backing of the US. The situation there today is graver than anything that had been seen across several decades. Furthermore, in the wake of the short Israel-Iran conflict, Israel has made little secret of its desire to destroy Iran, again with the tacit and implicit backing of the US.

Across entire West Asia, what we are witnessing today is a churn, and of a kind not witnessed previously. The eclipse of the Alawite Syrian regime, and the exposure of Iran's weaknesses during the recent Israel-Iran conflict, have added to fears of Sunni dominance in this volatile region. Today, the world seems to be at a point where nations like the US, China and Russia are all attempting to not merely

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dominate, but also carve-out zones of influence across this region.

Many regions of Asia may look relatively more peaceful compared to West Asia and Europe, but the internal situation in both Afghanistan and Pakistan - with terrorist groups operating their own fiefdoms - belies this fact. Also, what is contributing towards still more concern - both to the region and the world - is the further rise of the military in the affairs of the Pakistani State. This is well epitomised by the emergence of Asim Munir as the dominant figure in the affairs of Pakistan. It is something that poses a direct threat to the future of democracy across the region.

All this, in turn, directly affects Pakistan's present and future relations with India. The events of April and May this year, first the massacre of Hindu tourists in Pahalgam in Kashmir, and next the Indo-Pak conflict in May, already reflect the current reality and we should anticipate a period of heightened India-Pakistan conflicts. The Indo-Pak war in May this year has confirmed this. It further indicates how the skies are going to be the new zone of any future conflict, and how success would come to those countries that possess the best military equipment - India with its Rafale fighters from France, alongside the Russian made S-400 and the Barak missile, pitted against Pakistan's Turkish Songer drones and the several variants of the Chinese J-10C aircraft. Yet to be fully assessed are the implications of the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan nuclear arrangement, but what is evident is that Pakistan's decision to provide a 'nuclear umbrella' for Saudi Arabia marks a historic turning point in the

*The external situation, and the situation in India's immediate neighbourhood, is, hence, quite grim, but I do not subscribe to the view of many, that a dystopian future awaits countries like India.*

geopolitics of not only of West Asia but of South Asia – specially in the Indo-Pak context.

Compounding the uncertainty on India's Western front, are also the upheavals—earlier in Bangladesh, and more recently in Nepal. In both countries, Parliamentary democracy has been the main victim, and the military under various garbs the essential victor. India, hence, requires to be on its guard to ensure that the transformation of the overall situation and the pressures across the region, do not pose a danger to India's future and its progress. As of now, this is still work in progress, but the situation is far from a sanguine one.

The external situation, and the situation in India's immediate neighbourhood, is, hence, quite grim, but I do not subscribe to the view of many, that a dystopian future awaits countries like India. I would instead adhere to the belief that what is happening across the world highlights what some prefer to call 'the end of modernity'. We cannot, hence, afford to let down our guard.

My estimate of how India is placed in this situation, would appear at odds with what is generally written, stated or spoken of, at different fora and



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published in different journals in the country. In your invite, you had raised a question as to whether inconsistencies in the new - political arena would put brakes on our national ambitions and goals - geoeconomic, geopolitical and geostrategic. Answering the question would be a tall order in the prevailing circumstances. At the risk of hurting Indian sentiments, I would, nevertheless, urge that we in India move away from the belief that our role is today critical in determining the future course of world events. It might be much wiser if we in India were to take a more detached view, and take steps accordingly.

I would further add that it is too early for India to believe that it has 'arrived' on the world scene. Perceptions domestically regarding India's future are, to my mind, excessively optimistic to say the least. No doubt on the economic front, India has emerged as a country to reckon with, having become the fourth largest economy and the fastest growing economy in the world. Also that, India displays a great deal of maturity in both action and thought.

Yet, whether this is enough to tide over what I see as forthcoming turbulences in the political, the economic and the overall global scene is yet to be seen. This is particularly true of the decade 2025-2035. India needs to ponder more deeply over whether it possesses the necessary depth, rather than being satisfied with the status quo. Do understand that I am talking of situations that extend beyond traditional conflicts and wars between nations. The coming decade, for instance, is likely to throw up a spate of new challenges such as pandemics, climate change



and the movement of large masses of people, apart from other existing issues, which are likely to test the capability and capacity of most nations, including India.

While, I do not wish to be unduly pessimistic, I do believe that it is good to be realistic, about the positioning of India in today's world and in the uncertain global politics of today. For instance, India's relations with the so called Big Powers in the world – the US, Russia and China – are in a state of flux. No amount of optimism can obviate the fact that India-US relations have slipped dangerously, and are at a level where uncertainty is its most prominent characteristic. India's relations with Russia, though reasonably firm, has entered a period where there is room for disbelief, perhaps, due to some degree of equivocation on India's part in the wake of the Ukraine-Russia war. India's relations with China which have been unsatisfactory in recent years, resulting in several degrees of concern, again requires careful watching. Notwithstanding the rapport lately seen between Indian and Chinese leaders in Tianjin (China) on 30 August 2025, this is at best work in progress rather than a settled fact. Added to this, is the fact that as far as the pecking order is concerned India is beginning to be seen as a junior partner in the 'Troika' of China, Russia and India.

Positioning in the world of today, I wish to additionally point out that while South and West Asia have been beset by problems of varying magnitude for several months - and the US, China and other powers have been active here - India's absence from a region where it once exercised maximum traction has been



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deafening indeed. India's non-involvement in events affecting Iran, Syria and Palestine, also highlight the extent to which India has become a 'recessed power' across this vital region. All this does impact India's overall image in the councils of the world.

India's loss of influence at a time of economic growth cannot be easily explained. At one level, it possibly stems from being out of step with ground realities, and of not adapting enough to changing situations. India's improved relations with Europe and the UK at this time counts for little in this context. India withstanding US President Trump's pressure on the purchase of oil from Russia has been a relief, but has not produced any kind of dividend. Most glaring of all has been India's retreat from Southeast Asia, West Asia and Africa. These regions have been India's bailiwick over the years.

In conclusion, it is evident from what I just mentioned – and notwithstanding India's growth and professed leadership of the Global South – that India stands at the cross-roads of global politics today. We need to rectify this situation. Our policy directions need to be firmer and more agile to keep up with the current trends across the world. Our neighbourhood policy needs a total revamp. Positioning India in today's world demands a complete overhaul of India's strategic thought processes. It also requires a new vision and better foresight. ■



# US-INDIA RELATIONS: NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY IN A SHIFTING GLOBAL ORDER



MS INDRANI BAGCHI  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
ANANTA CENTRE



**Ms. Indrani Bagchi** examines the deteriorating US-India relationship under President Trump's second administration, highlighting unprecedented challenges and charting a path forward.

I haven't seen the US-India relationship in such a low position as I see it today. The only time it was worse than this was just after the nuclear tests in 1998. We are in a place which is very strange and very unusual for India.

India had basically believed that Trump's second administration would be a continuation of his first term. On the day of the US election, November 5th, I was coincidentally visiting the United States, walking down the streets of New York City. It was patently clear to me then that there was a very significant cultural shift in America that we had not caught earlier and we did not fully understand. I don't think we fully understand it even now because that is also an evolving situation, but there is a distinct cultural shift alongside the political shift that is there for all to see.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE NEW AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION**

From the beginning, India reckoned that we would have trouble on a couple of fronts. We would have



trouble on the tariff front, and this is not the first time President Trump has declared India to be the tariff king of the world. For anybody in the economic sphere, it has been evident that for years India has relied on heavy tariffs to protect its industry, even when the industry did not need protection. In a sense, it is a comeuppance to India's economic management, and to that extent, we probably could have taken some steps in anticipation.

The kind of American politics dominating America today is a lot more right-leaning, which is fine—we've had right-leaning presidents and administrations before. But this is a very different kind. This is almost a xenophobic right, and that's something we need to be very clear about. It is also very openly and determinedly white. Another aspect is the much more traditional, deeper Christianity fueling not just religious sentiment but also political sentiment. All of these come together in a mix that for a country like India is difficult to grasp all at once.

Add to this the mercurial personality of President



*Europe is blinded. Europe has no idea whether it's going or coming, whether they should defend Ukraine or who should defend Ukraine.*

Trump, the constant quest for personal aggrandizement and for global validation of whatever he is doing. An additional layer that complicates matters is the fact that this is an American president that has no qualms about making money, whether it is for America or whether it is for friends and family enterprises. He has no qualms about monetary benefits playing a very signal role in his policies.

This president comes with a very interesting mandate: to weed out immigrants, to start the process of making America self-reliant, and a mandate to basically charge the world for creating a great America again—that the world owes America the tools it needs to become great again.

## **THE END OF AMERICAN HEGEMONY**

Lastly, under President Trump's leadership, this is not America the hegemon that we saw in the last 50 years. He is an isolationist. He's perfectly happy to wall America in. If you see their latest national defense strategy, it's pretty clear that the defense of the homeland is paramount. He's not in the business of great power competition. He's gone beyond that competition with China—he's not in that game. He's perfectly happy to make a deal with China and with Russia. In fact, he wants to make deals with both.

What is complicating matters for him is that the rest of his administration is not there with him yet.

## **INDIA'S DIMINISHED STRATEGIC VALUE**

In the middle of all this is the US-India relationship. India was in many ways the beneficiary of the idea which has been around at least for the last quarter of a century—that the US and India relationship was special, consequential, and important enough in the world as we look at a growing, aggressive, expansionist China. That is something President Trump does not seem to understand or has rejected. That puts India in a much different position.

It basically means that India is sometimes a little more than all his allies and partners, but not much more. He has taken the machete to America's alliances. Sometimes it might feel that Trump is singling out India for special treatment, but frankly, if you go to Tokyo, they weep. What they have been forced to do is unbelievable. They are in the position of an old military ally of America, terrified of China and believing that there is no other option—that they cannot possibly stand on their own feet without America holding their hand. They have had to give in to humiliating agreements on investments in America that honestly, if given to any Indian government, would have been rejected outright.

Europe is blinded. Europe has no idea whether it's going or coming, whether they should defend Ukraine or who should defend Ukraine. Ukraine is literally holding the entire continent to ransom because nobody in that continent is contemplating the end of



# EVENT SCHEDULE

06 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER

MMA - FORTESS  
LAUNCH & DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK  
'BEING ORDINARY & DOING EXTRA ORDINARY THINGS'

09 OCT

9:30 am to 1:00 pm

MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER

MMA - GLIM CONCLAVE  
CREATING ENTREPRENEURIAL FAMILIES (HIGHLY SUBSIDIZED FEE)

09 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER

MMA - KAS TALK  
RETHINKING REWARDS: BUILDING COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE PRACTICES IN A  
CHANGING BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

11 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

TANISHQ, ANNA NAGAR

MMA - TIMELINKS  
GOLDEN EDGE SERIES MANAGEMENT LECTURE

15 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:15 pm

MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER

READ & GROW SERIES  
THE COMING WAVE: AI, POWER AND OUR FUTURE

23 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER

MMA - TIE TALK  
BUSINESS LEADERS, ESTABLISHED ENTREPRENEURS & DECISION MAKERS

27 OCT

9:30 am to 5:45 pm

IIT RESEARCH PARK AUDITORIUM

MANAGEMENT STUDENTS' CONVENTION  
FUTURE-READY: LEVERAGING AI, AGILITY & HUMAN SKILLS TO THRIVE IN A CHANGING WORLD?

29 OCT

6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

ANDHRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MMA - ANDHRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
MANAGEMENT LECTURE

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C Siva Kumar

Gp Capt R Vijayakumar (Retd), VSM



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C Siva Kumar



READ & GROW

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14th CavinKare - MMA

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R Dinesh



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Dr Srikanth Kandiappan

Indrani Bagchi



MMA - FDPPI - KAS Conclave

The Data Trust Imperative:  
Technology, Governance and the Future of Data Protection

27 SEPTEMBER 2025 | MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER





H Shankar

Na Vijayashanker



the war. They might be contemplating a ceasefire but not the end of the war. Russia is not winning the war. Russia started the war four years ago believing it was going to finish it in a week. It's now four years—a stalemate. There is no Ukrainian victory and no Russian victory either, and if we don't actually address the end of the war, this spillover is going to have additional adverse impact on India.

## THE CURRENT CRISIS

Where are we today with the US-India relationship? We are in the middle of a trade negotiation where India is holding on to its traditional red lines. The US is pushing really hard using every lever at its command to force India to open its agriculture sector. They've pulled back on dairies but they're definitely pushing on the agriculture sector.

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# UPCOMING

## WORKSHOPS

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**WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

08th Oct 2025| 10:00 AM to 01:00 PM

MMA Management Center

**WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE**

15th October 2025| 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM

MMA Management Center

**EFFECTIVE DELEGATION SKILLS**

17th Oct 2025| 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM

MMA Management Center

**MANAGING PERFORMANCE & CHANGE WITH COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS (FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE)**

24th Oct 2025| 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM

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Everything, including Russian oil—Trump doesn't care about Russian oil or Russia—this is a way to push India. The 50% tariffs are punitive action on India. H1B restrictions are equally punitive actions. The reason is very clear: he wants India to pick up the market for maize and soybean that China refuses to buy anymore. India has its own reasons for not opening up these sectors, but Trump is pushing.

What it has done is impact not only the political relationship between India and the US but even if the trade deal is done, there is now a sense of a trust deficit with the US. India and the US have worked for a quarter of a century to build that relationship from a place of no trust to a place of consequential trust. We are now heading back to a very different place.

The entire idea that Pakistan suddenly became attractive to the US in April only because Trump wanted his family to win from a crypto deal in Pakistan is unbelievable. Day before yesterday, President Trump delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban in Afghanistan that he wants the Bagram air base back, which basically means Trump wants to go back into Afghanistan. For anybody who thinks that there is a vision or strategy going on, I don't think they know what they're talking about.

Privately, President Trump's cabinet members tell Indian officials that they have no interest in Pakistan, but that is not what we see. The very fact that Pakistan now gets to use Saudi money to buy weapons which, as we know, will always be directed against India, by itself is an affront and has serious adverse security implications for India.

## THE PATH FORWARD

How do we deal with this situation? My sense is that we are prioritizing first the trade agreement with the US because the priority is actually to bring those tariffs down. Whatever we may or may not say, America is our biggest market, particularly in the areas being impacted—textiles, gems and jewelry, shrimp, etc. These are heavy employment sectors and it is very important for India to work out a deal with the US to bring those tariffs down.

I see that some change may be in the air because in the last few weeks President Trump has not mentioned India when it comes to tariffs or sanctions on countries buying Russian oil. In fact, he has gone after the Europeans and asked them to sanction the Chinese, but he has very prudently kept India out of this. I suspect somebody has gone to him to say that this is a relationship that you are literally whistling down the wind for absolutely no reason.

The second priority is for India to rebuild its domestic base in a couple of sectors. We need to add to the manufacturing base that we have, which is not very good. We need to bring technology back to India, make it easier for technologies to come back to India, to be designed in India, with innovation in India. We need to find smaller, shorter supply chains—more trusted supply chains. The idea is for us to be doing what we have been trying to do for the last few years, which is build resilient, shorter, trusted supply chains. That project should continue deeply.

Third, on defense, we need to be a lot more forward-leaning. Our defense procurement acquisition



system needs urgent improvement. While we prevailed in Operation Sindur, it also exposed many gaps within our systems which, if we don't address them with a sense of urgency, we might find that the next conflict becomes more difficult. And the next one will happen because Pakistan has now discovered that it has wind beneath its sail, and that wind apparently comes from America.

Finally, we need to have a clearer idea of where we should be diversifying our trade and economic engagements. We should conclude FTA negotiations with both the Gulf countries and Europe. Frankly, we need to be able to have a much clearer trading conversation with America. We are not doing that. We need to be doing that a lot more. ■



# INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS: STRATEGIC REASSESSMENT OF THE UKRAINE CONFLICT



MR NANDAN UNNIKRISHNAN  
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW  
OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
NEW DELHI



**Mr. Nandan Unnikrishnan** on India's strategic positioning amid the Russia-Ukraine war, offering perspectives on Russia's anticipated victory and India's need for policy recalibration.

**I**n the war between Russia and Ukraine, I'm afraid I will differ with Indrani fairly completely—literally the complete opposite. I don't think anybody in the world today sees any option but a Russian victory on the ground, and I'm talking of a military victory.

The problem in our understanding of why it's a Russian military victory probably stems from the fact that we are not clear as to what Russia views as a victory. Russia does not view territory as victory in this particular context. The Russian view is very simple: Ukrainian national neutrality. In other words, no membership of NATO and an incapability by Ukraine to either become a platform or to be able to launch any attack against Russia in the future.

I think Russia has reached a stage where those two primary objectives are, I would say, 95% achieved. So I really don't see an option on the ground to anything but a Russian victory. In this context, Europe is the one player that needs to readjust its worldview. Trump's pivot of the last 48 hours clearly indicates that he understands that Russia is winning, and he's



decided to wash his hands off so as not to be blamed for this. He has decided that Ukraine can win back all its territory with the help of Europe, and he's happy to supply any arms they want, but he is not going to get beyond that.

I also disagree about the fact that Trump is seeking any kind of deal—economic or otherwise—with the Russians. Trump is seeking to keep Russia as distant as possible from China, but that does not mean that he is necessarily looking at having a serious engagement with the Russians. Let me be very clear: I believe Trump is not averse to the war in Ukraine continuing if Europe is handling it. He would like Russia to be distracted in Europe and stay away from China while he concentrates on dealing with the challenge that China poses to the United States. His vision of the challenge of China may not be one that impresses us, but the point is he looks at it from a very different perspective than what we look at it. This is something that Indians have to factor in when looking at the Indo-Russian relationship.



## INDIA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

One of the primary problems that I think today stand in the way of serious economic development between India and Russia is the question of sanctions. I'm not talking of the latest 25% tariffs or 50% tariffs on oil. That will get negotiated and will get removed. India will also adjust. We will substantially reduce the purchase of oil from Russia from its current levels.

That is understandable because the United States today is, in many ways, a far more important relationship for us, particularly given our developmental agenda. But we have to keep in mind that we cannot totally eschew our relationship with the Russian Federation, and therefore steps will have to be taken to keep that pot boiling, as it were.

In the context of the Russian war with Ukraine, I think India needs to recalibrate its understanding of where that war is and what kind of outcome we are going to see. If I was a gentleman sitting in the Indian foreign office, the questions I would be asking myself are:

- Is there any negative that I see in a Russian victory in Ukraine for India?
- Is there any positive I see in Russia not having a victory in Ukraine?

The answers to these questions would be the ones determining the recalibration of my current policies towards Russia.

Overall, I would say that we have handled the situation well. We are equal contributors in military terms to both sides. We are equal contributors in

economic humanitarian aid to both sides—I'm advisedly saying both sides. Of course, on the economic front, our purchase of Russian oil is of immense help to the Russians given that they need areas to market their oil.

## **THE RUSSIA-INDIA-CHINA TRIANGLE**

There was a question about the long conversation Putin had with Modi during the SCO summit and how the relationship between the Russians, Indians, and Chinese will develop in the context of BRICS and SCO.

I personally am sceptical about RIC at this point of time—the Russia-India-China relationship—because the India-China relationship is still at a very nascent stage in terms of getting on its feet after the trials and tribulations that followed Galwan in 2020.

However, I am also very clear that if any Asian security architecture is to be evolved to give some stability to this area, then it would be impossible without Russia, India, and China coming to some kind of common page of understanding, even if it is the barest minimum. To that extent, I think the three countries would have to interact with each other and try to evolve their views to a level of understanding what is the basic minimum of each other's concerns.

As far as BRICS and SCO are concerned, I don't think that the euphoria about these presenting alternative visions of the world is valid at this point of time. Yes, both of them are platforms in which countries are voicing their unhappiness with the current rules of the game in the world. But what is more interesting is that the rule maker till now—the



United States—is also unhappy with the rules of the world as they exist today and wants to rework them.

This flux is, as Mr. Narayan said, a grim time. But I agree with him—there is no need for us to be pessimistic. For the simple reason, and this is where I hope we should understand: I am grateful that we are not yet a great power.

I am grateful, and I agree with Mr. Narayan, that we tend to attribute to ourselves far greater importance than we actually have on the world stage, and we should be grateful for that. There are some choices that we are not being asked to make, and we don't have to make them. There are pressures being put on us to make certain choices, but we have to be very clear in our own minds that these are not necessarily choices that we have to make.

We have to be governed by our national interest, and our national interest has to be driven by our domestic policies, by the need for domestic development. The final thought I leave is this: if we have flawed domestic policies, we will never have a flawless foreign policy. ■

# INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: TRADE, TRUST, AND TURBULENCE



DR SRIKANTH KONDAPALLI  
PROFESSOR IN CHINESE STUDIES, CENTRE  
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In a comprehensive analysis of India-China bilateral relations, **Dr Srikanth Kondapalli** examines trade imbalances, border tensions, and strategic opportunities amid shifting global alliances and China's growing regional influence.

**T**he recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Tianjin on August 31st and September 1st, along with Beijing's military victory parade, marked significant events in regional diplomacy. Equally noteworthy were the two phone calls between President Xi Jinping and President Trump in June and just days ago. These conversations initially focused on Taiwan-related red lines, resulting in the immediate denial of landing rights for Taiwanese President Elijah in Los Angeles.

While some suggest that improved US-China relations could be problematic for India in the longer run, I see a fundamental structural problem between China and the United States that remains intact. The Trump administration may seek to stabilize relations with China for the MAGA movement over the next two to three years, particularly to overcome rare earth metal deficiencies. However, the long-term conflict between these powers persists, even with Trump's isolationist policies.

The decoupling and de-risking strategies by both



the US and EU are here to stay, creating opportunities for India. If US-India trade talks yield concrete results, we could witness a significant shift in global supply chains.

## **CHINA'S EXPANDING GLOBAL FOOTPRINT**

China's role as an emerging hegemon is undeniably gaining strength. The country recently launched its fourth global initiative—the Global Governance Initiative—adding to the GDI, GSI, and GCI announced four years ago. The Chinese footprint is expanding globally, despite the Belt and Road Initiative's third summit scaling down offerings to approximately \$95 billion. While addressing criticisms about debt diplomacy, environmental issues, and transparency concerns, China continues steadily with the BRI.

China-centered global networks are increasing, particularly given Trump's isolationist stance. We're witnessing significant Chinese Navy activity in the



*With Trump tariffs, China's GDP is expected to grow at around 3% this year.*

Indian Ocean, including submarine visits and surveillance ships. China remains the largest trading partner for approximately thirty Indian Ocean states. Additionally, China is enhancing the Himalayan Quad and the Indian Ocean dialogue process in Yunnan province.

China currently leads in 5G technology, the EV sector, quantum computing, AI, and renewable energy sources, along with e-commerce platforms. These technological advantages facilitate Chinese expansion in the global economic domain.

## **CHINA'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

However, there are significant red flags. Real estate is declining in China, and GDP growth has dropped from 10% in 2010 to approximately 5% in recent years. With Trump tariffs, China's GDP is expected to grow at around 3% this year. Most critically, urban unemployment stands at 21%, with some estimates suggesting 40%.

COVID-related problems continue to linger. Approximately 46,000 companies have shut down in China due to COVID, resulting in \$800 million in debt. Local governments face severe debt issues, and COVID-related unemployment affects an estimated 80 million people—a huge socioeconomic and political problem for the Communist Party.

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC SWEET SPOT

In this context, India occupies a sweet spot. With growth rates of 7.8% to 8% in the first quarter, if India maintains these figures despite global headwinds from tariffs and other depressing situations, it will be in a very advantageous position.

However, the "China Plus" strategy hasn't worked out as expected. Of the 77,000 American companies in China, only 200 have moved to India, with others going to Vietnam, Indonesia, and other countries. There hasn't been a massive shift, though opportunities exist. The 38,000 European companies in China face bottlenecks due to the National Intelligence Law of 2017, creating openings for India if EU-India trade talks improve. The UK-India Free Trade Agreement could trigger major collaborations in the industrial sphere.

Japan has 87,000 companies in China but only 1,300 in India. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Tokyo resulted in a \$65 billion pledge and transfer of Shinkansen high-speed railway technologies—two significant gains.

Unlike China, where demographics are becoming skewed with an average age of 37 years, India's median age is approximately 28.2 years. Political leadership plays a crucial role in skill development and job creation. The H1B visa issue represents a definite step in attracting talent.

India's geographical location in the Indian Ocean, combined with initiatives like SAGAR and others, enhances its strategic position. Consolidating the voice of the global south—demonstrated at the G20



meeting in New Delhi—positions India well for its upcoming BRICS chairmanship next year.

## **BILATERAL RELATIONS: PRECARIOUS STABILITY**

Regarding bilateral relations, we're moving toward precarious stability with China. I call it precarious because we've only signed disengagement and grazing patrol agreements, not deescalation and de-induction of troops. However, in his 50-minute meeting with President Xi in Tianjin, the Prime Minister mentioned peace and stability on the border prevailing, suggesting normalization in the near future.

Several developments are noteworthy: the Mansarovar Yatra has resumed, direct flights are being considered, and visa processes are underway. However, there's a balance being maintained. Indian embassies and consulates are requiring Chinese visitors to show bank accounts with one lakh renminbi (approximately 12 lakh rupees equivalent) to obtain visas to India—possibly to avoid low-spending travelers.

Before COVID, 180 million Chinese traveled abroad. Even a small portion visiting India would be substantial. However, Communist Party cells control tourist agencies and divert traffic toward friendly countries. We've seen China weaponize tourism against South Korea during THAAD deployment, against Taiwan when they elected DPP candidates, and against Malaysia and Thailand.

China is also balancing its approach. Soon after Dr. Jaishankar's visit in July, they announced dam construction, with Premier Liang visiting Tibet to

attend these activities. President Xi himself has visited Tibet twice. There's significant traction on highways and railways from Sichuan to Tibet, requiring us to prepare for long-term border stability.

## **TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DIALOGUE MECHANISMS**

Regarding trade and investment, we haven't removed Press Note Number Three, which restricts Chinese investment in India. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned Chinese investment but expressed caution. In the last twenty years, total Chinese investment in India amounts to no more than \$8 billion for an economy of \$19 trillion. China is pressuring India to open consumer markets for the EV sector and other consumer durables. We're making some inroads—MG (Morrison Garrison), a Chinese-acquired company, is now visible on Indian roads.

We've blocked Huawei 5G trials, so there's no Chinese presence in the telecom sector. However, Huawei 5G networks operate extensively in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives. In Pakistan, one-third of CPEC involves Huawei fiber optics.

The Prime Minister mentioned no double standards on terrorism, related to the 1267 committee and post-Pathankot terror attacks. We should expect more traction here.

There are thirty dialogue processes between India and China—strategic dialogue between foreign ministries, annual defense dialogue, youth exchange, media-to-media, think tank exchanges, financial dialogue, steel dialogue, and renminbi-rupee exchange



discussions. None have resumed so far, suggesting more discussions in the coming year.

During Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit in August, we mentioned an expert group working on border management, with a striking reference to delimitation. The Special Representative mechanism aims to clarify the Line of Actual Control, but using terms like "delimitation"—the next step after LAC clarification—suggests possible progress in border talks.

## **REGIONAL DYNAMICS**

China's role in South Asia increased substantially after Prime Minister Oli's visit last December, when Nepal formally joined the BRI with concrete initiatives announced. However, with political turbulence in Nepal and the removal of Prime Minister Oli, the situation remains fluid.

The neighborhood has become challenging, with incidents in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives. Though Maldives has stabilized with the "India Out" campaign removed and the Prime Minister's recent visit, neighborhood restructuring continues.

India remains in a sweet spot with strong growth rates. To maintain these rates, we must resolve infrastructure challenges. Despite investments in roads, railways, shipyards, and fiber optics, the manufacturing sector hasn't taken off as expected. We anticipated it reaching 24% of GDP, but it remains around 18-19%. These are the areas requiring focused attention to leverage our strategic advantages in an evolving geopolitical landscape. ■



NAVIGATING U.S. IMMIGRATION

# OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR INDIAN STUDENTS & PROFESSIONALS



**Mr Nadadur S. Kumar**  
Attorney at Law  
U.S. Immigration Attorney





Understanding visa categories, recent regulatory changes, and pathways to permanent residency in an evolving immigration landscape. **Mr Nadadur S Kumar** provides practical insights on visa processes, compliance, and career pathways after graduation.

**I**mmigration has dominated global headlines, particularly regarding U.S.-India relations. I want to emphasize maintaining a long-term perspective. The United States is a stable democracy supported by phenomenal institutions. In democracies, leaders come and go because they are answerable to the electorate. When we see immigration news, it's best to step back and have faith in the institutions that have brought us to where we are today.

We must separate facts from fiction. Fundamentally, we do not have major changes in the law—the Immigration and Nationality Act has remained stable for decades. What is changing are regulations and policies from administration to administration.

The current administration is interpreting laws more narrowly, tightening implementation. Understanding the specifics helps us navigate effectively.



## **F1 STUDENT VISA: THREE CRITICAL CHANGES**

Previously, students were admitted on DS (Duration of Studies) status, allowing them to continue studies, transfer schools, and pursue STEM OPT without returning to USCIS. This has changed. DS has been removed and replaced with a maximum four-year cap. After four years, you must return to USCIS for adjudication where they review your activities, school attendance, and compliance.

The grace period following completion of studies has been reduced from 60 days to 30 days—a shortened window to apply for status change or leave the country.

These changes are extremely consequential. If you violate F1 regulations, your visa gets terminated at the end of four years. If you remain in the U.S. for more than 180 days after losing status, you face a three-year bar. Staying one year or longer means a ten-year bar from re-entry. F1 students cannot make careless mistakes anymore—the consequences are immediate and severe.



*The system is being skewed toward highly skilled individuals with advanced degrees and good wages.*

## **H1B VISA: THE LOTTERY SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION**

After completing studies, students receive OPT (Optional Practical Training)—work authorization in their field. For STEM fields, OPT is granted for three years. After that, you need an H1B visa, granted for six years and controlled by numerical limits: 65,000 annually, plus 20,000 for graduate degrees.

The current administration has proposed significant lottery changes. People with high skills, master's degrees, and high prevailing wages will receive greater weighted average. The system is being skewed toward highly skilled individuals with advanced degrees and good wages. Those with bachelor's degrees or limited experience will be at the lower end.

This matters tremendously because 70% of H1B visas are held by Indian nationals, most in STEM fields. The lottery system remains, but your chances are becoming much smaller.

## **L1, O1, AND OTHER VISA CATEGORIES**

The L1 visa enables multinational corporations to transfer employees between organizational branches. L1A is for managerial capacity, L1B for specialized professional fields. It's granted for six to seven years without numerical controls or Labor Department wage requirements. However, you need substantial

organizational structure—a hierarchy with president, vice presidents, staff, and support personnel. Many smaller companies struggle to maintain this structure when seeking extensions.

The O1 visa is for aliens of extraordinary ability. Recently, they've allowed people with startups demonstrating capability in bringing capital or creating U.S. employment to obtain O1 visas.

## **THE GREEN CARD CHALLENGE: LONG WAIT TIMES**

Immigrant visas are issued with annual limits: 675,000 total, with about 40% for family-based and 30-35% for employment-based immigration. No country may receive more than 7% of the total.

Indians place excessive demand on limited supply capped by 7%. For employment-based categories with a master's degree, waiting time is approximately 15-20 years and increasing. With a bachelor's degree, it's 25 years. This has destabilized career paths—people remain in animated suspension, unable to decide whether to buy homes, where to establish futures, or start businesses. For family-based petitions: marriage to a permanent resident means four to five years wait; marriage to a U.S. citizen provides green cards in one to two years. If a U.S. citizen sibling sponsors a relative, the waiting time is 25 years.

## **EB-5: A TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITY**

EB-5 visas were created to create U.S. employment and attract capital. In 2022, Congress changed the EB-5 program landscape. Under the program, 10,000 visas



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are issued nationally, with Indians receiving about 1,000. They created reserved categories: 10% for targeted employment areas through regional centers, 20% for rural projects, and 2% for infrastructure-related projects. These numbers are current for Indians with no waiting time—if you invest, you get a green card within two years.

The reform fixed the investment at \$800,000, unchangeable by Congress through 2027. Those in the U.S. on any visa can apply for change of status domestically. When you apply with your \$800,000 investment petition, you get all green card holder rights except the actual card. This includes universal work authorization—work anywhere, not confined to one employer or field. You can start your own company and access U.S. economy opportunities. You also receive Advance Parole for travel without visiting consulates.

Robust regulatory standards subject regional centers to multiple audits. Each project must be approved and audited. Your \$800,000 investment carries some risk, but within four to six years, you get the money back. The only cost is the opportunity cost of parking money with low return (around 1%). However, don't view EB-5 as regular investment—your primary goal is getting a green card quickly.

The Golden Visa Card differs: you pay \$5 million (not an investment) to get your green card without worldwide tax liability. It's for high net worth individuals wanting to start U.S. businesses. Registration has started but no implementation regulations exist yet.



## CLOSING REFLECTIONS: VALUES THAT SUSTAIN SUCCESS

When people ask about my background, I reflect on my journey. I went on a Rotary scholarship in the wake of India's Emergency, serving as an unofficial ambassador. From the beginning, my identity was non-negotiable—it was developed in India through the Indian value system and family unit. The American Dream and Indian dream both allowed me to dream big.

I pursued an MBA, then became among the first to attend law school in the U.S. itself when people typically pursued engineering or medicine.

For youngsters, there is no substitute for hard work. My parents taught me: don't do anything that creates fear. I conduct myself fearlessly—whether speaking at the Malibu Hindu Temple where I'm a trustee, at Rotary Clubs, or litigating with the Department of Homeland Security in the highest courts.

Winning is a way of life. If you don't learn to win, you learn to lose. In 30-plus years, I have not lost a single case filed in the U.S.—I've won each through ethical practice without compromising integrity.

I don't do this for money—making wealth was never my goal. I will never exploit people who come to me in fragile states. My father, a banker, used to say: if you take money from somebody, your responsibility begins. Once you take it, you better get the job done.

These Indian values, cultivated over time, have stood me in good stead. They will do the same for students who come to the U.S. or stay in India. Work hard. The sky is the limit. ■

# Q&A

## ***What about tier two or smaller universities in the U.S.?***

All educational institutions are good in the U.S. unless you're talking about Ivy League. A master's degree from tier one schools gives faster entry, but it's the field you study and skills you learn that matter. Ensure your school is accredited—unaccredited schools pose future problems with OPT and H1B qualification.

## ***How can students balance academics, work, and social life?***

Cultural adjustment is easier now with emerging global culture. My concern is students understanding they're guests with limitations. If arrested for drunk driving or hit-and-run, visas are automatically cancelled. Controversial social media comments can create challenges. My advice: think carefully, don't walk into troubled waters. Your goal is pursuing education first. Express opinions based on sound principles, not local or international politics. The U.S. guarantees free speech—taking a long-term perspective, this will settle down.

## ***What mental health resources exist on U.S. campuses?***

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academic pressure. Mental health facilities are available on every campus with trained multicultural counselors. Mental issues stem from excessive competition, life stresses, being away from families, and independent living—no different than Indian students attending schools in other states.

### ***How has the U.S. job market evolved for international graduates?***

The U.S. economy faces multiple fluctuations. When there's economic stress, mass layoffs occur. For international students controlled by timelines, the impact is severe. However, Indian students' greatest asset is they're smart and highly skilled in technical areas. Indian students compete at extraordinary levels. The American system is a meritocracy—if you show creativity, originality, and skill, you'll flourish.

Indian students bring \$20 billion annually to the U.S. economy through tuition alone, create employment for 350,000 U.S. citizens, and benefit the economy by \$40 billion. Indian students are assets in terms of finances, intelligence, skills, vision, and work ethic.

### ***Can a father sponsor EB-5 for an 18-year-old studying in India?***

Yes. Eighteen years is coming of age, so you can apply. Funds need not come from India—resources can come from anywhere. Many H1B holders use their equity, stock options, or home loans to invest in EB-5 programs for quick green cards. You become a passive investor and general partner in infrastructure-oriented projects.



## ***Does O1 lead to EB-2?***

O1 is non-immigrant; EB-2 is immigrant—different categories. However, there's EB-1 for aliens of extraordinary ability. I handle many EB-1 cases for people in sciences, business, arts—tabla players, kathakali performers, violinists, pop singers. Because of their achievements, they get EB-1A quickly. There's also EB-1B for entertainers and EB-1C for L1 intercompany transfers with five to six-year green card pathway.

## ***What scholarship opportunities exist for Indian students?***

Graduate funding comes from research and teaching assistantships. You can apply for limited scholarships, but most financial aid is for U.S. citizens only. Students find opportunities through Curricular Practical Training and off-campus employment. Critical alert: do not work without authorization. Unauthorized employment sacrifices your entire future for short-term gain. Working in restaurants without authorization now risks your future. Talk to your foreign student advisor for guidance.

## ***Should I pursue an MBA given current uncertainty?***

U.S. higher education offers the best education globally. Skills learned pursuing a master's degree have currency worldwide—you command higher wages in the Middle East and elsewhere. U.S. education has premium value. Getting a U.S. degree is a phenomenal asset for skills and marketing yourself. Establishing a company with a U.S. address provides unmeasurable opportunities.

## ***My son completed MS Mechanical in Germany. Any U.S. career possibilities?***

It depends on market timing. The U.S. situation is currently unsteady. In Europe, many students find jobs in Germany. Indian population has grown throughout Central, Eastern, Western Europe, and the Middle East. Getting a U.S. degree improves your chances.

## ***How to prepare for visa interview as a performer?***

For Bharatanatyam artists, vocalists, or tabla players, there's the P3 (culturally unique) visa. You need specific contracts and performance venues. Your skill speaks for itself. I've seen consulates test tabla players by giving them instruments, or asking chefs to make samosas. If you misrepresent skills, your future is finished. ■



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CELEBRATING INNOVATION AT SCALE:

# A VISION FOR INDIA'S FUTURE



**R Dinesh**

Executive Chairman

TVS Supply Chain Solutions Limited



**Mr. R Dinesh** examines the factors pushing India to become a global launchpad for breakthrough innovation and the opportunities that can redefine the nation.

**I**t is an honor to be present here among some of the brightest minds who are shaping the future of our country and, in many ways, going beyond that as well. Standing here today fills me with immense pride and optimism to be amongst all of you.

I'm here because of Mr. CKR—someone I still vividly recall from my early days. When I first came to Chennai in 2004, he visited me and explained the innovation of the sachet and how it had actually made a difference to lives. That memory stays with me even today. In a way, I'm paying him back by coming here and congratulating him. Thank you, Mr. CKR, for having inspired that spark of innovation in me all those years ago.

Having said that, I believe it's equally important to recognize that innovation doesn't happen without looking into the details of implementation and impact creation. Today's awardees are standing examples of how they have brought to fruition not just an idea but created real impact—social impact, sustainability impact, and most importantly, created a new future not only for themselves but for society in general.



Congratulations again from my side.

It was heartening to learn that the selection process evaluated 320 applications. That's an incredible number to cover, and it shows the popularity and reach of this award. I'm confident that going forward, this will become the preferred award for all those aspiring to celebrate innovation and innovation at scale. I wish that happens soon.

As we stand here today, we are facing immense challenges, and I believe that's what truly triggers the motivation for bringing in innovation. Mr. CKR spoke about AI and the thought process that drives innovation. But for me, every challenge and every problem we see creates not just an opportunity but a thought process by which we start getting involved in innovation.

Today, no company can survive without making changes. I call that incremental innovation. But what we are celebrating here today is actually breakthrough innovation—breakthroughs that make a difference to society and to people.



# MEASURING INNOVATION: TWO CRITICAL LENSES

There are two or three methodologies by which we can evaluate these innovations. One is looking at social impact, and as we saw today, some of these innovations are already in practice. Another is to look at commercial impact and the change these innovations make in the way businesses are run or applications are used.

If I look at today's landscape, the number and speed with which innovations are happening are so large and, I would say, so small and incremental that we just lose sight of what we can actually see at the end of the tunnel. As we sit here today, many of us may not even envisage something that's going to happen in the next few years as fundamentally changing the way we think and behave.



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Everything we use today is something that maybe twenty years ago—considering our age—we would not have expected to actually see. Therefore, I would say it's a societal responsibility to make sure we create the ecosystem for making this happen.

## INDIA'S UNIQUE POSITION IN GLOBAL INNOVATION

Today, as we've heard, India is at the cusp of capturing this benefit and value. If you look at every proof of innovation that has happened within India, they have scaled up significantly and brought about significant cost reductions.

In my mind, I'm looking at the Jaipur Foot and the cost reduction they achieved. I'm looking at Aravind Eye Care and the cost of operations they've been able to attain. I'm looking at educational programs like those launched by *Thalir Thiran Thittam* or *The Tim Tim Tare* (TTT) scheme. The scale that all of these have reached—all have come from tier-2 cities, tier-3 cities, and reached a scale that not just crosses India but also crosses borders and reaches out to the globe.

That, I think, is what we are actually celebrating today. That's why these awards make immense sense, and that's why I believe we should congratulate not just the awardees but the thought process behind bringing out these innovations and celebrating them as successes.

The true value of innovation, whether in social impact or commercial impact, lies in the scale by which we can reach. In India itself, you have the largest scale available. Very soon, we will be talking about a significant portion of the world's population



*I would strongly urge—and I've already mentioned this—that the award should be made global.*

benefiting if you count all the Indians across the globe in terms of reach.

Therefore, it's not just about celebrating innovation. It is about bringing the thought process into every mind to see how they can improve their lives and the lives of others. That's what is going to make the difference.

## **INNOVATION BEYOND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The third aspect I would like to bring up is that innovation is not just linked with entrepreneurship. Innovation is also linked to the way we look at costs and the way we look at our own thought processes, even within our own companies.

I call that internal entrepreneurship. Every individual who is working or who is employed can be an entrepreneur in the way they think and apply innovation to their everyday life. That's what makes, I think, a unique difference—what I would call the Indian mindset of wanting to get things at the lowest cost for the best value. This can be a unique differentiator for us going forward.

As we sit here today, why am I excited? Because many of these innovators are already thinking of going beyond India. The opportunity we have in the global south—whether it be Africa or other countries

*I see India not just as the world's largest growing economy but as the launchpad of innovation.*

similarly placed to India—is something all of us can utilize and enjoy as a benefit and as value we can create.

I would strongly urge—and I've already mentioned this—that the award should be made global. Rather than just looking at it as having special recognition, acknowledging those who have been able to scale beyond boundaries is something I would urge the organizers to look at and prepare for.

## **BUILDING THE ECOSYSTEM: OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

What do we, as people associated with this initiative, have to do? Mr. CKR created and thought about this in his individual way. His passion, as I mentioned, rubbed off on many people and will continue to do so. But what we really need to do is create the ecosystem where new ideas can emerge—not just as entrepreneurs but also as internal thought processes.

Second, how do we increase risk-taking ability and support, especially with funding? In fact, I repeatedly keep telling people that when we look at benefits to be given, it should be to create a risk pool that either private and public participation can provide, so that we can actually innovate and take risks boldly.

Third is how do we actually celebrate failure? This is crucial for fostering a culture of innovation.



## INDIA AS THE GLOBAL LABORATORY

I see India not just as the world's largest growing economy but as the launchpad of innovation. I'm very confident that seeing the thought and the awardees today, I believe that the launchpad has been created. This is just one microcosm we are celebrating. I'm sure there are thousands and hundreds out there, and as these awards reach more people, or as information about these awards keeps reaching more and more, you're going to see many of them being celebrated.

Finally, I think it's very important that these awards actually become not just a celebration of innovation but also what I would call a stamp of approval. The patents that Mr. CKR spoke about—the patents that actually get used on a regular basis—are the ones we should actually celebrate and talk about, just as we are talking about the scaling of innovation.

So it becomes very important for us that this is not seen as just an awards event. It is seen as a celebration and also looked at as bringing out more and more hidden talent, more and more hidden thoughts that can convert to the innovation of the future.

## A VISION FOR TOMORROW

I would like to congratulate once again all the winners. I think this gives India an opportunity to be the laboratory and the launchpad for the global south. We can create the future of the world as we sit here today.

Thank you. Let us continue to innovate boldly,

responsibly, inclusively, and at scale.

Tomorrow, or in the future, when we celebrate these awards, it should be looked at—while we may have a smaller number of winners—as bringing in the largest pool of talent available. Because India's future is all about innovation, whether incremental or breakthrough, whether it be in products, services, or solutions that we think of, which can be applied to the betterment of the world, to the betterment of society, and to create wealth and value for the future.

Thank you, and once again, thank you for giving me this opportunity to be part of this celebration of India's innovative spirit. ■



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