

The Sanmar Group

Sanmar Holdings Ltd

Chemicals

Chemplast Sanmar Ltd

PVC

Chlorochemicals

Trubore Piping Systems

TCI Sanmar Chemicals LLC, Egypt

Shipping

Sanmar Shipping Ltd

Engineering

Sanmar Engineering Corporation Ltd

Flowserve Sanmar Ltd

BS&B Safety Systems (India) Ltd

Sanmar Engineering Services Ltd

Fisher Sanmar Ltd

Xomox Sanmar Ltd

Tyco Sanmar Ltd

Sanmar Metals Corporation

Sanmar Foundries Ltd

Sanmar Ferrotech Ltd

Eisenwerk Erla GmbH, Germany

Matrix Metals LLC, USA

Speciality Chemicals

Sanmar Speciality Chemicals Ltd

ProCitius Research

Bangalore Genei

Performance Chemicals

Intec Polymers

Cabot Sanmar Ltd

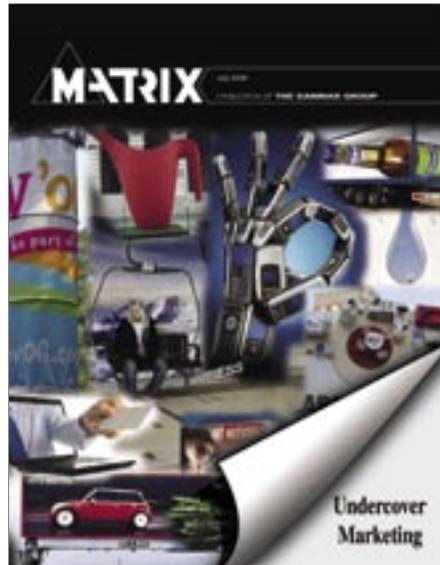


9, Cathedral Road, Chennai 600 086.

Tel: + 91 44 2812 8500

Fax: + 91 44 2811 1902

In this issue...



| | | | |
|--|----|--|----|
| Cover Story | | | |
| Undercover Marketing | 4 | Bangalore Genei's Knowledge Quest | 19 |
| Success Stories | | Trubore Piping Systems' Dealers Conference | 20 |
| Commissioning of Sanmar Foundries Unit 2 | 9 | ProCitius Annual Day Celebrations | 21 |
| Marine Terminal's First Coastal Shipment | 10 | Egyptian Extravaganza | 22 |
| Fisher-Sanmar Large Valve Plant is Fully Operational | 12 | SEC Factory Day | 24 |
| India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue | | SANMAR-TNTA City Clubs Tennis League | 25 |
| India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD) | 13 | Medical Camp at Melavanjore | 26 |
| Governance Matters | | Remedial Classes for Mettur Children- 3rd Centre Opened | 27 |
| New Thrust on Governance in Liberalised Economy | 14 | Employees' Corner | |
| Pristine Settings Around Sanmar | | Small Wonder - A Sanmar Child Prodigy | 28 |
| Peacocks on the ramp at Xomox Sanmar, Viralimalai | 16 | Sanmarite's Daughter Among 28 Young International Climate Champions | 29 |
| Stakeholder Engagement | | Legends from the South | |
| Vocational Training at Keokuk | 18 | M G Ramachandran | 30 |

Matrix can be viewed at www.sanmargroup.com

Designed and edited by Kalamkriya Limited, 9, Cathedral Road, Chennai 600 086. Ph: + 91 44 2812 8051/ 52

For Private Circulation Only.

Marketing



A special poster for a chain of motorway restaurant.

It's a sultry evening in a small town in Northern India. In a middle income group residential colony, children are playing. In saunters a mini van painted yellow with the words Maggi painted across in a squiggly-hand font. Two

young men set up a cooking device and begin cooking the noodles. The strong smell of 'masala' wafts in the air. Curious children assemble and watch, mouths watering. Soon the children get a plateful of the wonder squiggles, all for free, with

mini samplers thrown in. Mono sodium glutamate notwithstanding, the Maggi Noodle snack arrives in a traditional small town. Those were the pre-INSAT days when print advertisements ruled the roost and life was relatively free of eyeball

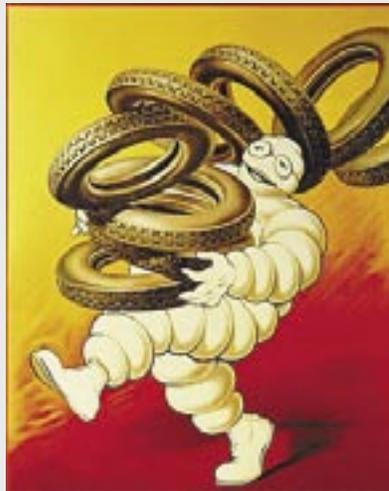
catching frenzies of the ad world. What a way to attack the target directly!

Rewind still further back in time, to the days of the jingle. A jingle for a particular brand of men's inner-wear would pierce eardrums and crouch into the temporal, lingering on with the sheer strength of its irritability – so irritable that the brand name keeps pounding in your memory – brand recall at its irritable best. “VIP” becomes a name synonymous with undergarments and at the point of purchase, rings a loud bell.

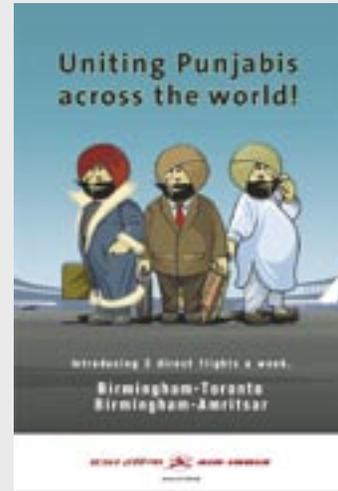


Not too far beyond was the mascot-touted branding, iconising a product or service. The Air-India Maharaja held the promise of royalty. Ah well, there were no non-frill Y classes then and those who came close to royalty and people earning in foreign currency, flew with the Maharaja. Ultimately, the mascot proved better than the brand, helped weave dreams that the brand could not live up to. The Maharaja's creator, Bobby Kooka, also created the 'little Lotta-lookalike', the utterly, butterly, mascot for Amul Butter. The mascot combined with contemporary topics laced with humour became a signature line for the brand. Hoardings with catchy captions invited attention, catapulting the Amul girl into a household name. While Amul lives on and so does Bibendum, the Michelin Man born in 1908 and some international names, many mascots have since scooted.

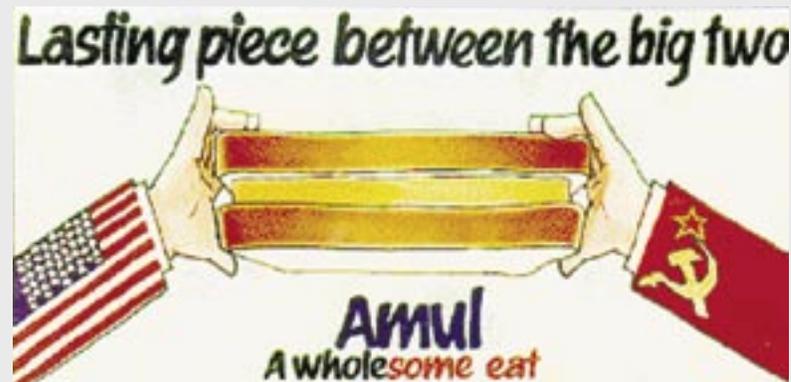
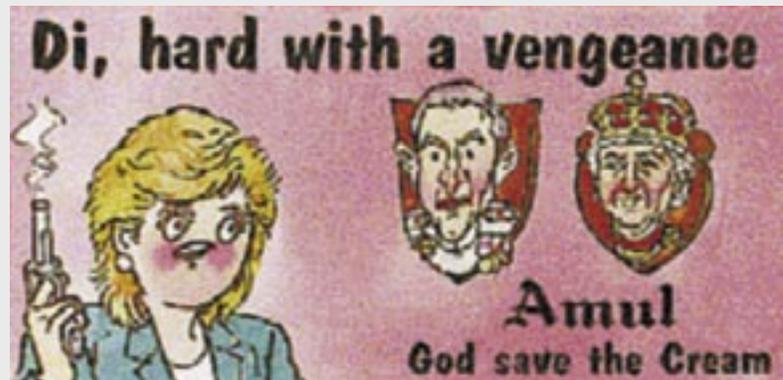
These are some of the tactics that has caught the attention of the public-out of the box advertising ideas that



Bibendum, the Michelin Man.



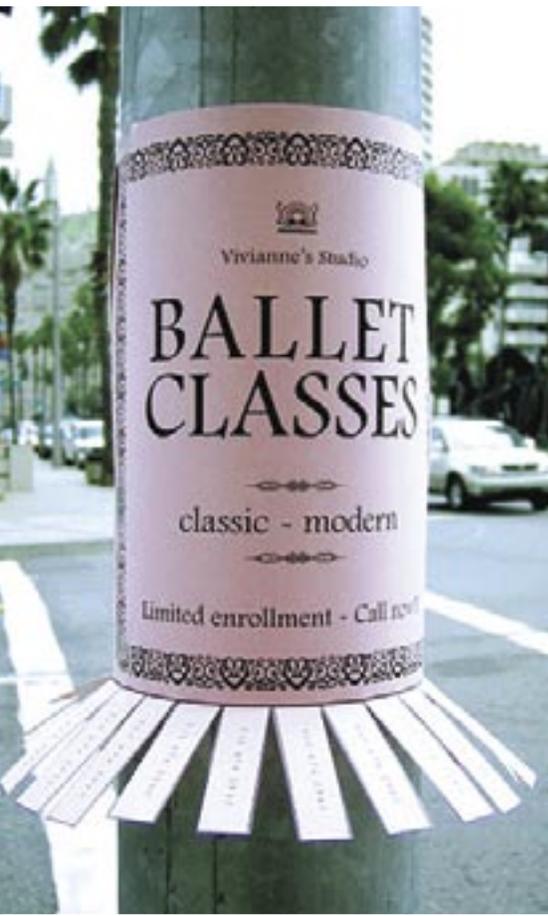
Air India's Maharaja.



Some 'timely' promotions for Amul Butter.

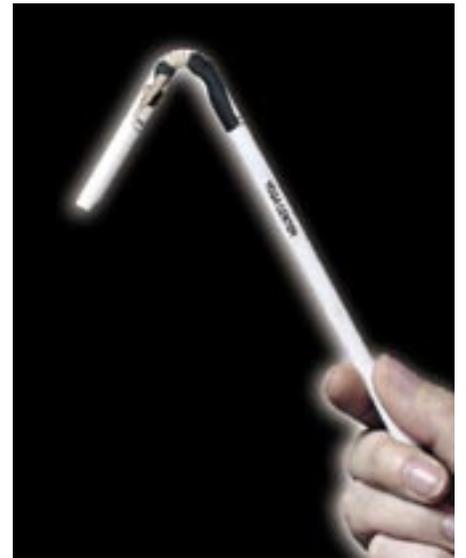
digressed totally from the trodden path. In 1984, Jay Conrad Levinson coined the word 'guerrilla marketing' to denote creative, compelling, low

budget marketing strategies. Guerrilla marketing is an unconfined, unplugged 'monkeying' around to get the message across. The basic ingredients for guerrilla



marketing are a high level of creativity and passion for the product or service. However bizarre the idea, however high the brand recall, the brand does need to deliver on the implied promises made to customers with every campaign. The guru of guerrilla marketing has authored the “Guerrilla Marketing” series of books that sold over 14 million copies and is currently available in 42 languages.

The question of ethics also comes to play. Guerrilla Marketing may appear to be some kind of rogue advertising but not quite. Its existence is at stake if unethical means are adopted and laws of the land are broken. Microsoft’s MSN butterflies stuck over store windows, walls and subway stations in New York city lasted 24 hours. It was an illegal campaign and Microsoft issued an apology to the City of New York. The controversy and



deliberations however, gave enough publicity, and perhaps helped move away from a ‘nerdy’ perception of the brand.



Case of the guerrilla merchants

A New York Times' magazine in 2004 reported a very successful case of undercover pedalling. In the wake of the mobile phone invasion, a mobile phone maker hired actors and let them play out their role on the streets, with a live audience. An actor would place the mobile phone in the hands of a passerby and request him to take a picture of himself – and rest his case! This is reality advertising at its best. Product demo, brand experience, customer contact and feedback and live platform for customer psychology data.

Similarly, a leading digital camera maker sent their sales representatives as tourists to corner people on the street to take a picture of him. The customer experiences first hand, the ease with which a picture can be taken and with minimum fuss. Of course, this works only if the product and its features have a strong ground to stand on.

Yet another twist to the guerrilla movement is the anonymity and reach offered by the world wide web. Consider the problem of a digital gaming product marketer. The audience age is approximately 10 to 30 years, predominantly male. The range is wide, attention span is minimal and lifestyles varied. The common grounds for pitching are the chat rooms and digital online communities. What better way to market a product than to hire a salesman who uses the product and is passionate about it? Participation in the chats will yield prospective gamers who can be hired to pitch for the product directly to the consumer at minimal

cost through blogs, chat rooms and other online game zones. The salesman understands the product and the consumer, and, is making easy money for doing something he loves. There's a lot happening out there in a wired world. People are hired, products are marketed, the buzz is created, public relations built, views noticed – no costs, no noise.



The Magical P James



Back in the backyard in Chennai, the greatest example of guerrilla marketing is the marketing campaign of James the Magician. Chennai city suddenly got abuzz with the magical Mr James. James Senior was a magician too. The Senior's junior, Kennedy, continued to use his father's name to tout his services. In a burgeoning middle class society, entertainment for private events, children's birthday parties, etc., gained momentum and hey presto, P James with a few tricks under his hat got into business. The need came first or the service is hard to gauge. P James, launched his guerrilla marketing campaign by painting the words, 'P James Magician, Phone no 9841072571'

all over the walls, on bridges, etc., around the city of Chennai. His scrawl on the walls have become a part and parcel of Chennai's graffiti. The graffiti also evolved with technological advents. His message with the phone number got upgraded with a mobile number once this handy walky-talky hit the world. Now P James is reachable directly, instantly.

There are an estimated 30,000 instances of his advertisement. He has, spent about 14 years painting the graffiti, by

himself in the night. He uses a mixture of black oxide and Fevicol adhesive for the paint, as this is cheap, and rain proof. Aggressively contested for wall-space by political parties, commercial products and cinema posters, James, managed to achieve a very high 'graffiti-density'. His campaign was fast gaining eyeballs and resulting in winning deals but the magic campaign soon came to an end. Chennai city authorities came down heavily on huge hoardings and illegal banners that choked the city's skyline. P James' graffiti sales pitch came down as the Commissioner of Police instructed him to call off his campaign. Yet, he is the local, 'mom-

and-pop' entertainment outfit that the whole city talks and blogs about. Blogs are the shortest cut to the other side of the world. P James and his marketing are discussed even in the US and has got listed in Wikipedia. There are some electronic versions of newsletters featuring the smart magician.

In a data driven world, the prospective customer base is huge and the venues for marketing are numerous. Amidst this constant bombardment of sales pitches,

there is too much noise and nothing is heard at all. The customer also has technology tools to block out marketing efforts. It is the occasional P James' of the world that are heard. If Microsoft can, can't James or any body else? A little bit of chutzpah, a little bit of ingenuity and very little money - a guerrilla campaign engulfs you and you hardly realize. Spoof, you're hooked!



James' Nemesis

On an electrical junction box on the roadside, one would expect to see a helpline or emergency telephone number. But some junction boxes and visible areas in Chennai sport a new message from Jack the magician. Is it James' nemesis or is it a campaign variation strategy to retain market share? A simple call to that number would solve the puzzle. But beware, you would fall prey to the shadow marketing tactics of the undercover marketer!

Commissioning of Sanmar Foundries Unit 2

The Sanmar Foundries' Unit 2 large flaskless moulding line was commissioned on 26 June 2008 at Viralimalai near Trichy. The sand foundry facilities will now have a capacity of 30,000 tonnes per annum of steel castings.

With expanded capacities and state-of-the-art equipment, Sanmar Foundries is now ready to tap the worldwide potential in the valves, transportation, construction and mining sector. With the combined capabilities of Matrix Metals' steel foundries in the US, Sanmar's steel foundry business is well on its way to be counted among the best in the world.



P Natarajan starts the 60 ton mixer.



Auspicious beginnings – Puja before production trials.

Marine Terminal's

Production plant to consignee - shipped direct. Chemplast Sanmar's marine terminal facility at Karaikal was completed in August 2007. With the commissioning of the ethylene dichloride facility, the Karaikal unit was geared to transport imported ethylene directly from ship to production facility. The 1.6 km stretch of pipeline extending into the sea lets ships to dock and transfer material safely through the cryogenic stainless steel pipelines, minimising intermediate material handling.

First Coastal Shipment

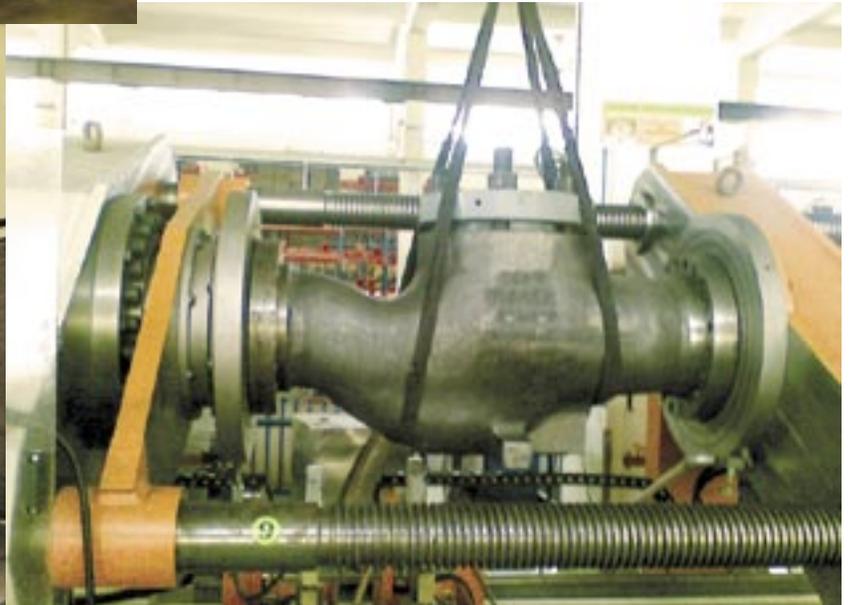
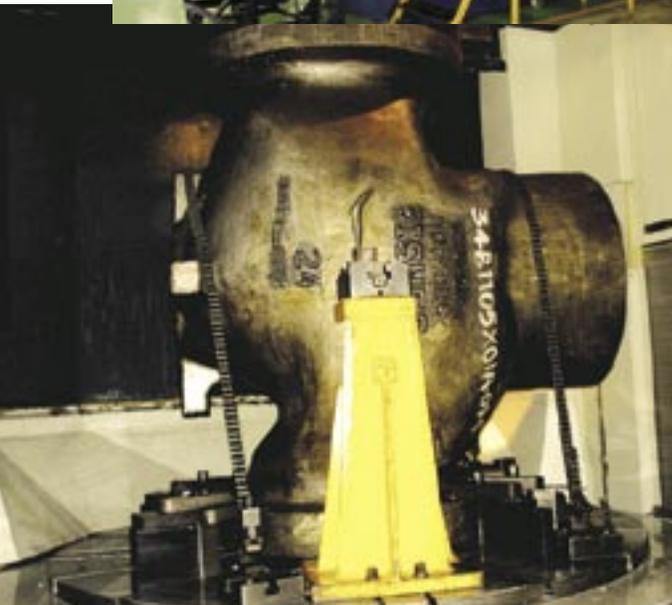
For the first time, this facility was used to transport the finished product, caustic soda lye from the jetty directly on to the vessel. On 26 April 2008, the vessel Oram Bricks docked at the marine terminal and about 4,500 liquid metric tonnes of caustic soda lye consigned to National Aluminium Company Limited headed for Visakhapatnam straight from the production unit.



Oram Bricks a customers vessel being loaded with caustic soda lye at Karikal

Fisher-Sanmar Large Valve Plant is Fully Operational

Fisher Sanmar's large valve plant facility was inaugurated by Terry D Buzbee in January 2007. The plant completed various phases of installations and trials and is fully operational since March 2008. The facility now has a capacity of about 800 large valves.



India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD)

N Kumar, The Sanmar Group, was part of the delegation at the ISSD held in Singapore this May. Kumar is at the forefront giving momentum to the India-Singapore relationship, under the auspices of the International Enterprise Singapore and the Confederation of the Indian Industry. Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh, co-chairs the ISSD with Ambassador Satinder Lambah, special envoy of the Prime Minister of India. Besides bilateral relations between India and Singapore, ISSD participants also discussed other regional developments, the growing political, military and economic dominance of China and the role and impact of the US on Asia.

The delegation met Singapore's Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean, Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Vivian Balakrishnan and also called upon the Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana. The next ISSD meeting will be held in February next year in New Delhi.

Delegates at the India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD).



New Thrust on Governance in

N Kumar talked to *Focus*, the magazine from Central Bank of India, that featured a discussion on 'New thrust on Governance in liberalised economy'. Excerpts from the interview:

Do you think that proper governance is given the due importance by all the enterprises?

Corporate governance is a process. Sitting on this side. I would say companies tick mark that this is done and that is met with. But the crux of corporate governance is transparency of operations. World over, we have good companies and the others. Good companies follow corporate governance - contributed by a competent and socially responsible board and they even try to improve the standards. It is in my view, a 'continuing process'. It is not just meeting certain norms like section 49 in the Company's Act. It is a route to 'excellence in management'. It is the route to be more responsive in benefiting the shareholders and customers. It is a societal responsibility to run a company on merits and certain standards. I think by and large the corporate enterprises are aware of this and are on the road to following it.

Do you think that the corporate governance issue is given due consideration in the real corporate management of enterprises in India?

What in your view are the major

issues in evolving an ideal pattern of corporate governance?

I think the issue is one of mindset. The simple mechanism is to draw procedures and follow them strictly. A corporate enterprise should have the prime objective of conducting business as per ethical standards which ultimately makes a company a good or bad one. Ethics in business is of utmost importance. When we violate ethical standards the gains however big will be short lived. So the real issue in building up an effective corporate governance system is the genuineness in the management's ethical stance. The ultimate focus of business is people and the governance objective should facilitate in reaching them. Another major aspect is that of risk assessment and risk mitigation. Anticipation and preparedness to risks that are material to the growth and credibility of the organisation is a factor that should figure in all governance patterns.

What is good corporate governance...?

An internal control mechanism of an organisation based on procedures, processes and managerial commitment. It brings good reputation for the company. The governance pattern should not only be good but appear to be good.

It is not cosmetic but something embedded in the company's DNA. It is an essential thing for a company. Good corporate governance emerges in an organisation out of conscious efforts to achieve it. It has to be textured by the skill groups in various spheres and monitoring bodies like audit committee, expenditure committee, purchases committee, etc. Corporate governance is not just keeping things in order for the present but to

FOCUS: There has been lot of academic discussions on the issue of Corporate Governance. Do you think that the corporate governance issue is given due consideration in the real corporate management of enterprises in India?

N. KUMAR: I would confidently say "yes". Company managements in India and elsewhere should give due consideration to the governance aspect in their own interest and in their responsibilities to the society. The academic and business discussions on corporate governance is of course an on going aspect as we always look to new ideas and mechanisms to make governance better. The liberalization and exposure to the outside world have greatly enlarged our vision. We are now more confident of what we can think of, what we can work out and what we can dream about. There is more outside recognition on India's intellectual capabilities. I think that the new confidence is a fall out of the liberalized economy. It has helped in bringing about improvements in governance as well. I am happy to mention here that a major initiative in the country's corporate governance was taken by CII when I was the President. A Report made by us involving eminent personalities including Mr. Rahul Bajaj and Dr. Omkar Goswami was presented to the then Union Minister Mr. P. Chidabaram. The Report served to stimulate significant discussions on the subject though it initially focused on Public Sector, Banks and Financial institutions. With business process outsourcing and geographically diversified organizations, the cross-pollination of best practices in governance is happening.

prepare and place the enterprise in a future responsive mode. It does not come through mere ambitions. A company has to work hard to be in the right place in the business to look to a greater space in the future. Good corporate governance

Liberalised Economy

therefore serves to keep an organisation in a place of comfort.

Do you think that the growth prospects in the economy will serve as a push-factor for better governance?

Yes. It is. The prospects of higher economic growth, more reforms and larger exposure to technology are now routes to make our corporate enterprises more efficient and future ready. Naturally

up our accounting systems, operating models, technology efficiency and management techniques matching with international practice. For example The Sanmar group is now acquiring businesses in Germany, Egypt and the U.S. While doing so we find that it demands different transparency mechanisms, and accounting skills. Further more, when we discuss these aspects in our Board, it becomes imperative to analyse

various matters with a global perspective. Our vision has to enlarge. Indian IT companies while discussing foreign operations earlier analysed only with a focus on foreign exchange. Now the situation has changed. With Indian companies getting listed abroad and acquiring foreign companies they have to now analyze not merely exchange variations but a whole lot of management aspects and market related matters. The economic and business growth opportunities have great modifying effect on our management perceptions.

Finally, what in your view should be the priority area in a company's governance

objective.

STAKEHOLDERS – is the main priority followed by People, Societal welfare and Interests of the customers by offering them the best of products

and services; Interests of the employees as they are the people making things happen; meeting the legal and moral obligations in business; and of course, moving forward to the future with commitment and confidence. I believe that the collective wisdom of the Board and top management of an enterprise is sure to make it when it is bound by the ethics in business.

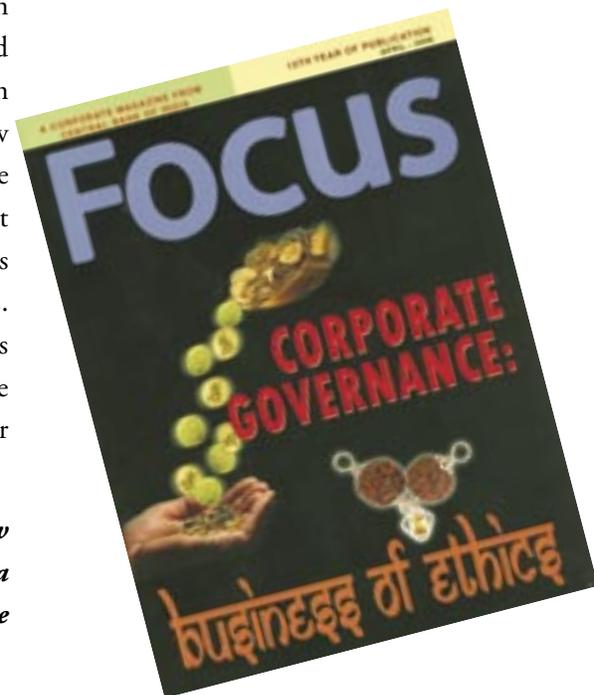


N. KUMAR

Vice Chairman, SANMAR Group, Former President-CII

recognized as second largest market. Combination of these factors coupled with new concepts in corporate management brings in increased focus on governance practices that can meet the growth perspective. In the era of angel funding, global capital investments, mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance has become a key competitive differentiator

this is an opportunity to improve our governance capabilities. I think that the opportunities coming to Indian companies for global business opens up new vistas to better governance. When we enter foreign markets we have to tone





Peacocks on the ramp at Xomox Sanmar, Viralimalai



Vocational Training at Keokuk

5 students including a young girl were letting the sparks fly at the welding booths of Keokuk Steel Castings Company, Keokuk, Iowa. These were the trainees at the certificate course in welding held by Keokuk Steel Castings. Ron Gilbert, principal of Hamilton Junior and High School was looking for vocational programs for his students, Roger Courtney, CEO of Matrix Metals was looking for more skilled welders and S J Smith, a welding company in Keokuk, was willing to provide the welding supplies. The trio came together to come up with this certificate program in welding for students above 18 years of age, while still at school.

Rob Crowley, Kevin Carr, Jeff Maxwell and Jed Soper who have put in long years of service at Keokuk Steel Castings made up the instructing team. The first step in the entire program was an extensive orientation in safety. Students go through the welding course and at the end of the program, based on a test to assess proficiency, a certificate of completion is provided to students. Interested students can also take up employment with the company.



High school students acquiring welding skills.



Welding in process repair at the Acerlan Foundry.

Bangalore Genei's Knowledge Quest

When Genei's geniuses collude, intellectual sparks fly! Bangalore Genei, a division of Sanmar Speciality Chemicals embarked on a knowledge sharing program, Quest in September 2007. Quest has been running successfully, with the programs being held once in every quarter. A typical Quest agenda has an external technical expert giving a lecture on a scientific topic, a lecture or presentation from an in-house expert and some presentations from other scientists internally. To add in some more challenges, the event is characterised by quizzes, games, group discussions and other interactive sessions on specific topics. At the end of each Quest program, there is knowledge sharing, there is fun and participation from one and all at Bangalore Genei. Four Quest programs have been completed since its beginning last year.

Some of the topics discussed at Quest:

Stem cells - Therapies for the Future, by Dr Mithua Ghosh, R&D, Bangalore Genei.

si-RNA: Present and Future Scope, by Sheeraz, a Bangalore Genei scientist.

Presentation by Dr Anjali A Karande, Professor, Dept. of Bio Chemistry, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Clinical applications of Cytogenetics and Fluorescence in situ hybridisation, focussing on clinical, cancer and prenatal genetics by Dr T S Sundareshan (external speaker) who is a cytogeneticist, consultant with Anand Diagnostic, M S Ramaiah Medical College and Dr Rao's Genetic Laboratory and Research Centre.

Predictive Diagnostics, a lecture delivered by Radhakrishnan Srinivas (a scientist at Bangalore Genei).

Baculovirus expression system by M S Pradeep (a scientist at Bangalore Genei).

Genes that control the geometry of leaf by Dr Utpal Nath, Asst. Prof. Dept. of Microbiology and Cell Culture, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Most Quest sessions are followed by active deliberations on the topic and interactions with the external experts. The last Quest program was held on 14 June 2008 with active participation from the scientists and professionals.

The next Quest is scheduled for the second week of August 2008 and yet another young team from Genei will host the program.



Dr Anjali A Karande



Radhakrishnan



Dr Sankolli welcomes Dr T S Sundareshan.



Atul Jha explaining his poster.



Murli Ramachandran giving away prizes to the winners of poster contest.

Trubore Piping Systems' Dealers Conference

Trubore Piping Systems held its second Dealers' Conference on 28 April 2008. About 55 dealers spread across Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala attended the meet. The senior management from Chemplast Sanmar addressed the dealers, driving the Sanmar ethos and practices of business. The dealers received the Dealership Certificates from the Managing Director, P S Jayaraman. Mementos were also distributed. With increasing demand in the PVC pipes business, Trubore Piping Systems, Chemplast Sanmar's pipes division, is being expanded to include a 20,000 tonnes per annum facility at Belgaum. Once commissioned, the dealer fraternity is expected to increase to more than 100 spread across Karnataka, Maharashtra and Orissa.



P S Jayaraman distributing the dealership certificates & mementos.



Dealers one-to-one with the MD.



ProCitius Annual Day Celebrations

ProCitius Research celebrated its 6th Annual day on 21 June 2008. Dr Doss and Dr Y Koteswar Rao addressed the gathering.

Murli Ramachandran gave away awards for top performers.

As is customary, the event was marked by games and fun activities replete with cake cutting to mark the day.

Dr Jos P Varghese gave the vote of thanks.



Top performers of ProCitius Research.



Egyptian

TCI Sanmar Celebrates First Anniversary

TCI Sanmar commemorated its first anniversary of coming into the Sanmar fold on 24 April 2008, at the El Masry Stadium, Port Said. The event was a first of its kind for TCI-Sanmarites in Egypt. A 25-member organising committee was set up with Manoj Kumar Srivastava and Mohammed El Kazaz as front-end members spearheading the planning. About 750 people were in the guest list. Employees' spouse and children also participated in the function. The show began with a 'Arabised' Tamil introduction by Mostafa Saad and a 'Tamilised' Arabic introduction by Prabhu and subsequent translation! Usama Lotfy Alim of HR was the master of ceremonies for the evening. JK Menon and Kalidas presented a company and projects overview respectively. There were entertainment programs and a show of talent by employees and their children. The evening was capped with a sumptuous dinner.



The team from Egypt that visited India performed a skit on their 'Indian' experience.



Extravaganza



The audience.

The organising committee.



Sanmar Engineering Corporation Factory Day



Top performers of Sanmar Engineering Corporation Ltd, Karapakkam.

Sanmar Engineering Corporation, Karapakkam celebrated Factory Day on 1 July 2008. Top performers were recognised by the senior management.

Sports activities.



SANMAR-TNTA City Clubs Tennis League

This year's Sanmar-TNTA City Clubs Tennis League winners were MCC A from the A Zone. MCC A has won the A zone title for the fifth year in a row. MCC A will hence retain the K S Narayanan Rolling Trophy. A new trophy will be installed for the next year. The Sanmar Group has doubled the prize money this year and has also increased the sponsorship amount substantially.



N Kumar presenting the trophy to MCC A.



Medical Camp at Melavanjore

Chemplast Sanmar's regular preventive health care programs and free health diagnostics to the local community has met with great success in Mettur. Chemplast Sanmar partnered with Vinayaga Mission, Karaikal and conducted a free medical camp at Karaikal on 13 June 2008.

About 200 people in Keezhavanjore/ Melavanjore villages benefitted from the camp and received medical assistance. V M C Sivakumar, the local MLA was the chief guest and K Rajendran, Vice President, T R Pattinam Commune Panchayat, inaugurated the program.



Remedial Classes for Mettur Children- 3rd Centre Opened

The third tuition centre for the benefit of the children living in Kozhipannai village, Mettur, was inaugurated by Chemplast Sanmar on 12 June 2008. The two centres opened earlier in Mottur and Veeranur, are running successfully. The tuition centres provide remedial classes to young children and it is designed to provide coaching support to minimise school drop out.



Small Wonder - A Sanmar Child Prodigy

Christmas Day in 2008 falls on which day of the week? Is there a chance of a long weekend? Most of us would dash to the nearest organiser – planner, calendar, mobile phone or whatever. But 5-year-old Abhishek has the weekdays of the calendar year 2007 and 2008 stored in his memory. He would simply rattle off the name of the day!

Abhishek has been growing up like any normal kid. But he surprised his parents by recounting days and events and numbers with exact precision. Barely out of kindergarten, he knows the multiplication tables from 2 to 10. He can uncover jumbled up English words in a jiffy. He can read out all the

text in the newspaper. He is able to break each word into syllables and pronounce them. He is also able to add up and subtract complex numbers. Though he is not familiar with the Tamil script, he is able to write the letters out. Perhaps his brain perceives the letters as an objective and he copies out the shapes; but at this speed? He has managed to pick up these skills all by himself. His parents feel he could be a child prodigy. Sure he is.

Abhishek is the son of W V Narayanan, ProCitius Research, Sanmar Speciality Chemicals.



Abhishek rattles off the content in the newspaper while most kids his of age barely recognise the alphabets.

Sanmarite's Daughter Among 28 Young International Climate Champions

Shruti Neelakantan was among the 28 international young climate champions selected by the British Council, Canada for participating in an expedition to the Canadian Arctic. The British Council, Canada invited the Indian national climate champions to make a video presentation to select the Indian representative for the Canadian expedition. The presentation by Shruti titled "Green Earth". was selected along with another student's presentation from Jaipur from amongst the world climate champions. The expedition to the Canadian Arctic will include 28 young people from Canada, the UK, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, India and Ireland who will be joined by artists, scientists and educators from Canada, the US and the UK. The voyage across the seas from Iceland, round Greenland to the town of Iqaluit on Baffin Island will equip these voyagers to be Climate Change Ambassadors both at home and abroad. This year's voyage on the Russian research vessel the Shokalskiy breaks new ground by bringing together young people from seven different countries. The project is designed to engage a whole generation of young people around the world and Shruti is part of this elite team.

The Indian Climate Champions programme is part of the British Council's Low Carbon Futures project aimed at achieving a range of medium and long term climate change objectives in India.

The British Council, India launched the Indian Climate Change Champions 2008 competition in January this year. Shruti was among



Shruti Neelakantan at the presentation.

the 20 who qualified as 'ambassadors of climate change' at the national level. Shruti and Archana, who are among the 20 national climate change champions are from Sri Sankara Senior Secondary School, Adyar, Chennai. The program aims to give young people across the world a voice to improve understanding and inspire positive action about climate change. Shruti, Archana and Jaswanth as climate change ambassadors use

blogs, wikis and facebook groups to get their green message across to people and spread awareness. According to Shruti, the biggest problem is applying climate change to our daily lives and understanding the effects of climate change at a personal level.

Shruti is the daughter of KV Neelakantan, of The Sanmar Group.

Sankara students shine in national-level contests

It has been a string of achievements for students of Sri Sankara Senior Secondary School, Adyar. Shruti K.N and Archana Jayaraman of class XI have done their school proud by being selected as Young Indian Champions for the year 2008 by the British Council recently.

The school principal, Subala Ananthasubramanian said that the British Council had organised a contest for 20 Young Indian Climate Champions 2008 and the two girls had qualified for the national level later entered the national level contest which was held in Delhi.

Computer Society of India conducted a programming contest for school students in Chennai in January.

Amongst the many teams that participated, 51 schools were selected for the national level competition which was held at Rajalakshmi Engineering College in February.

The Sankara school team consisting of M. Bharath, B. Srivastava and S.R. Subramaniam came second in the national level and will represent India in the international level to be held in September. They received a cash award of Rs.10,000 for their achievement so far.



A PROUD MOMENT! Shruti K.N receiving the Young Indian Champion award from Prof. Pydie, regional director for British Council, of New Delhi.

In the International Olympiad jointly conducted by IARCS (Indian Association for research in Computer Science) and C.I.S.E., Srirangapatna.

Four students from the Pre-Open Vedaikumbharan, Mrs. S.R. Manikandan and Chaitanya have qualified for training programme. In 16 to 29 at their school campus according to the SARASWATHI'S

winner in the International Olympiad 2007. Aditya M. Subramanian appeared for the Biology Olympiad conducted by the Indian Association of Teachers of Biological Sciences in November 2007. Having appeared for the national level Olympiad, he has now been selected for the Biology orientation camp selection camp - 2008 for international level.

British Ramani of class cleared the first level of the Physics Olympiad conducted by the Indian Association of Physics Teachers (IAPT) in November 2007 qualified to write the national level test in February for city children.

Four students from the Pre-Open Vedaikumbharan, Mrs. S.R. Manikandan and Chaitanya have qualified for training programme. In 16 to 29 at their school campus according to the SARASWATHI'S

M G Ramachandran

(1917-1987)

M G Ramachandran (1917-1987) was arguably India's most charismatic matinee idol, especially popular in Tamil Nadu, where he dominated films and politics for decades. With an enormous reputation as a philanthropist and friend of the underdog, an image his films assiduously cultivated, he was at once romantic hero and father figure in a film world known for its magnificent if incredible obsessions.

MGR, as he was known to his fans and the cognoscenti alike, enjoyed the adulation of millions of Tamilians and became the state's chief minister in 1977, mainly on the strength of the devotion to the Tamil cause his party espoused. MGR was born at Nawalapitiya, near Kandy, Sri Lanka, to Marudur Gopala Menon and Satyabhama. His ancestors had migrated from Vadavannur, Palakkad, Kerala.

MGR lost his father early. Moving to Tamil Nadu with his mother, he joined a drama troupe called the Original Boys Company, unable to afford school. After years of doing roles minor and major on stage, he became a film actor in time, and gradually rose to great heights, through years of hard work, disappointments, even humiliation. MGR was unlucky in marriage, his first wife Bhargavi and second wife Sadanandavati succumbing to disease at a young age. His third wife was V N Janaki, a former film actress.

Making his film debut in 1935, MGR had to wait till the release of the 1947 superhit *Rajakumari*—which incidentally had dialogues by Karunanidhi—to attain star status. He became hugely popular among

the masses through playing the saviour of the poor and the meek in film after film. He also succeeded in conquering the hearts of women, by showing great concern for them in his roles. In between the romantic and valorous scenes which portrayed him as a superhero, he found time to be the perfect brother and son to adoring women characters.

MGR's achievements were remarkable for someone of his humble origins. His good looks and proficiency in the martial arts of the cinematic kind led to his first break as an actor in *Sati Lilavati*. In the 1940s and 50s, the Tamil film industry was being transformed by brilliant propagandists turned screenwriters like C N Annadurai, M Karunanidhi and others of the Dravidian movement, who used the medium of cinema to reach the masses and transform the political complexion of the state in favour of the Tamil masses against the upper castes and classes wielding power at the time. MGR starred in many of the films they helped make. Annadurai or Anna, a protégé of E V Ramaswami Naicker or EVR, the founder of the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), became his mentor and MGR joined the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Annadurai's new party. Both Karunanidhi and MGR became stars of the party and played key roles in DMK's dramatic electoral triumph over the Congress Party in the 1967 elections.

His films made MGR a matinee idol and he started helping people in need, sowing the seeds for his reputation as a philanthropist. When Annadurai

died in harness as Tamil Nadu's chief minister, another brilliant disciple of Anna, Karunanidhi, who had achieved fame as a firebrand scriptwriter and Tamil scholar, succeeded him. While Karunanidhi was in power, there grew differences of perception between him and his old friend MGR, now the party's treasurer, leading to their eventual estrangement. MGR led a campaign calling for probity in politics and was expelled from the DMK. In 1977, MGR's ADMK, later renamed AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) was swept into power. In his first term, MGR earned a reputation as an honest politician.

MGR's movies acted as an effective medium of communication for the Dravidian movement. For over 25 years, he was one of two major celebrities in Tamil cinema, along with the renowned thespian Sivaji Ganesan. Films like *Madurai Veeran*, *Nadodi Mannan*, *Anbe Va* and *Adimai Penn* took him to the pinnacle of stardom.

MGR survived a gunshot wound in a startling incident involving co-star M R Radha in 1967. Though the injury affected his speech, he carried on regardless, continuing to make box office hits for two more decades. He won the national award in the best actor category for the film *Rickshakaran*.

MGR was a member of the Congress Party till 1953 when he joined the DMK. He became a vocal Tamil and Dravidian nationalist and prominent member of the DMK (Dravidian Progressive Federation). He became a member of

the State Legislative Council in 1962. He was first elected to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in 1967. After the death of his mentor, Annadurai, MGR became the treasurer of DMK in 1969 after Karunanidhi became the chief minister. He became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1977, the first film actor in India to do so, and remained in office till his death in 1987.

One of MGR's most successful schemes was the re-introduction of the "Mid-day Meal Scheme" in government-run and

aided schools in Tamil Nadu. He founded the Tamil University, The Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University and the Women's University in Tamil Nadu.

In 1984, MGR fell sick and was rushed to the U.S. for treatment. He died on 24 December, 1987, after a prolonged illness.

The highest honour in the country came to MGR after his death, when he was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna.

MGR was often the first to personally offer relief at times of disasters like fire, flood, drought, and cyclones. He was the first donor during the war with China in 1962, donating Rs 75,000 to the war fund.

He was the founder and editor of *Thai*, a weekly magazine and Anna, a daily newspaper in Tamil. He owned Sathya Studios and Emgeeyar Pictures which produced many of the films he acted in. He also founded the MGR Schools in Kodambakkam offering free education and food for film workers' children. He was the president of the *Nadigar Sangam*, the South India Film Artists Association, for four terms.

MGR's contribution to the film industry was phenomenal and he remained one of the biggest celebrity in Tamil cinema for several years. He acted in over 130 films and produced 3 films. His film *Malaikkallan*, was inspired by Namakkal V Ramalingam's novel and was produced in 6 languages viz, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and Sinhalese. He starred with his contemporary Sivaji Ganesan in only one movie. His co-stars in his 100th film were J Jayalalitha and Sowcar Janaki.

MGR's films are watched by his ardent fans with great enthusiasm even today.

His films offered wonderful entertainment and had very valuable messages for the masses.

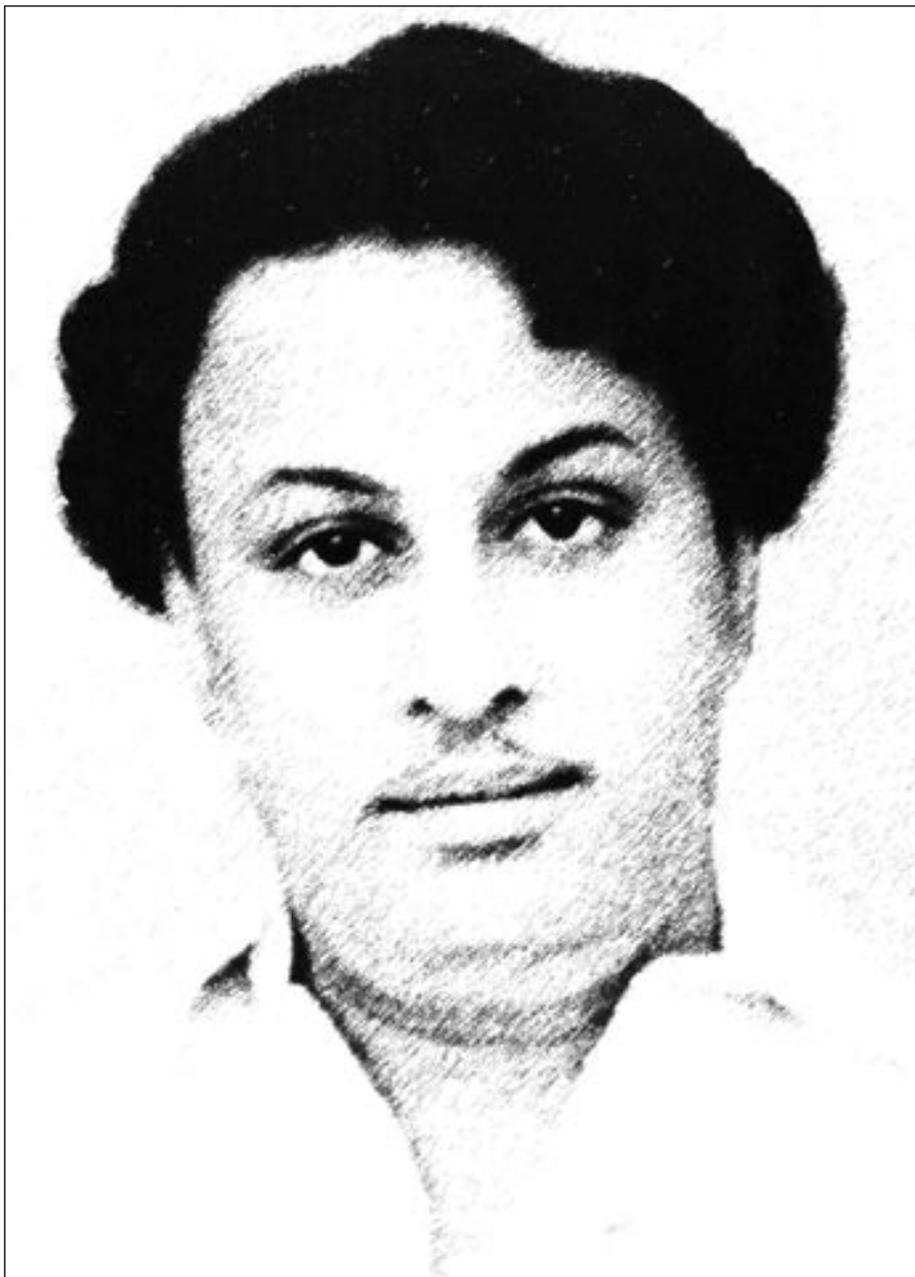


Illustration by S Girish

