

From the President



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President, ICAI

Dear Professional Colleagues,

India stands at the inflection point in the realm of its financial journey. The country is deepening the foundations of financial literacy and expanding the dimensions within which financial inclusion translates into meaningful participation, economic opportunity becomes more accessible, and prosperity becomes enduring.

This transformation of India's financial landscape over the past decade has been remarkable, not only in the scale and speed of institutional and technological change but also in the way citizens have embraced newer avenues of saving, spending, borrowing, and investing. The numbers bear testimony to this transformation as India's Financial Inclusion Index rose to 70 in March 2026, marking a significant increase of 27% from 2017. The World Bank's Global Findex Database 2025 highlights India's remarkable progress in financial inclusion, with Account ownership recording 89% since 2011, reflecting increased access to formal financial services and active account usage over the past decade.

In addition, government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar-enabled financial services (JAM Trinity), and widespread mobile connectivity have brought millions of citizens within the ambit of the formal financial system. The rapid adoption of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and digital payments has further reshaped everyday financial interactions, making transactions

faster, more accessible, and increasingly seamless. It is a remarkable welfare feat that in a country as heterogeneous and vast as India, the direct benefit transfer has stood at INR 52 lakh crore in 320 schemes of the government till 10th August 2026. At the same time, wider access to insurance and pension products, coupled with growing participation in investment avenues, is gradually deepening the financial security and resilience of households.

The country is gradually moving beyond the traditional paradigm of saving to a more diversified culture of informed and purposeful investment. Citizens are increasingly exploring formal investment avenues, seeking to channelise their savings towards wealth creation while developing a greater understanding of risk, return, and long-term financial goals. This evolution marks an important transition from financial exclusion to financial participation and now towards financial empowerment. Yet participation alone cannot ensure lasting financial well-being; it needs to be supplemented by awareness, prudence, and financial discipline.

In my view, while financial inclusion has laid the pathway for a robust financial ecosystem and provides the necessary infrastructure as its backbone, it is financial literacy, acting as the central nervous system, which strengthens the ability to funnel it effectively by reaching the desired audience through rightly communicated and reinforced measures. Such financial capability provides the confidence to make informed decisions, and financial discipline ensures that those decisions remain risk-free and sustainable. The true measure of a financially empowered India, therefore, lies not merely in the number of citizens who have access to financial services but in their ability to understand, evaluate, and make prudent choices within an increasingly complex financial ecosystem.

The changing contours of India's financial landscape have fundamentally transformed the meaning of financial literacy. It no longer remains confined to operating a bank account or understanding the importance of saving. In an increasingly sophisticated financial ecosystem, financial literacy encompasses the ability to plan, protect, manage and grow one's financial resources responsibly. I firmly believe that its foundations must be laid early in life. Introducing young minds to the principles of saving, insurance, pension, credit, investment, taxation, and financial planning can cultivate sound financial habits and enable them to recognise both the opportunities and risks associated with financial decisions.

The digital transformation of financial services has added another vital dimension to this responsibility. UPI, digital banking, online financial services, KYC and technology-enabled authentication have made financial transactions

more accessible, convenient and seamless. Yet, accessibility without awareness can create vulnerabilities of its own. The same technology that has democratised financial access can also be misused through phishing, impersonation, fraudulent investment schemes, misinformation and other forms of digital fraud. The growing sophistication of Artificial Intelligence has further amplified these risks by making manipulation increasingly convincing. This makes digital financial literacy an integral component of financial literacy, empowering citizens to verify information, safeguarding their credentials, questioning improbable promises and recognising the warning signs of fraud.

A financially aware individual contributes to a financially informed household, which in turn strengthens a financially resilient society. Financial literacy must reach students, rural and semi-urban communities, first-time investors, households and MSMEs, while recognising their distinct financial needs. At the heart of this endeavour remains trust - the trust that citizens place in institutions, financial systems and, more importantly, in professionals who guide them in managing their financial affairs. I firmly believe that every Chartered Accountant can become an ambassador of financial literacy and contribute to building a financially informed and responsible society.

As the torchbearer of the Institute committed to the public interest, I am proud that ICAI has been consistently advancing this responsibility through a wide spectrum of initiatives like Vittiya Gyan – ICAI Ka Abhiyaan, Vittiya Gyan Melas, Investor Awareness Programmes and targeted financial & tax literacy initiatives. The Institute has taken financial education beyond conventional forums, deep into communities encompassing students, entrepreneurs, professionals, rural communities, self-help groups, and other segments of society. Meanwhile, at the top level, our engagement with government bodies and institutions has enabled us to widen the reach of this knowledge.

Initiatives, such as Project Vanijya, further seek to introduce students from an early age to commerce, banking, money management, taxation, and ethical business practices, thereby nurturing financial capability from their formative years. Similarly, our continued collaboration with the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority and other stakeholders has further strengthened our efforts towards investor awareness and protection. Further, our outreach to tribal and rural communities reflects our commitment to ensuring that the benefits of financial knowledge reach the grassroots. These efforts reaffirm our belief that financial literacy cannot be a one-time campaign; it must evolve into a sustained culture of informed financial decision-making.

Let's have a look at some important developments related to the profession:

IFAC Board Meeting

In a historic landmark for the Indian accountancy profession, the Institute is proud to host the International Federation of

Accountants (IFAC) Board Meeting in India, scheduled for September 2–3, 2026, in New Delhi.

The hosting of this prestigious global congregation in India is a significant recognition of the country's growing influence in the international accountancy ecosystem. It reflects the increasing global role of Indian Chartered Accountants, whose expertise, talent and professional capabilities are contributing to the evolution of the profession across borders.

Strengthening Global Pathways for Indian Chartered Accountants

My visit to Singapore, along with CA. Mangesh Kinare, Vice President, ICAI, provided an important opportunity to strengthen ICAI's international engagement and advance avenues for global mobility for our members in the region.

• ICAI International Conference – ASEAN

ICAI organised its first ICAI International Conference – ASEAN on August 21–22, 2026, under the theme “*Beyond Borders: Connecting Ideas, Creating Opportunities*”. The conference brought together members and professionals from across the world and provided a valuable platform for dialogue on the changing role of the accountancy profession in an increasingly interconnected world. CA. Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry, inaugurated the conference as the Chief Guest. He emphasised that as India assumes a larger role in the global growth landscape, Chartered Accountants have an important opportunity and responsibility to strengthen trust, enable investment and support the nation's journey towards sustainable and globally integrated economic growth. The conference was well received by the delegates and reflected the growing need for the profession to remain globally connected, technologically prepared, and future-ready.

• ICAI-ISCA: Building Professional Pathways

One of the significant outcomes of the visit was the progress made towards strengthening professional pathways between the ICAI and the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA). I am pleased to share that the ISCA has granted ICAI members full exemption from its Foundation-level course. ICAI is also actively engaging with ISCA to secure further exemptions at the Professional level. This is an important step for our members. A smoother pathway towards the ISCA qualification can enhance opportunities for professional mobility, international recognition and career growth, particularly for Chartered Accountants who are already based in Singapore or planning to move there.

Subject to the approval of the Government of India, ICAI Council has agreed that eligible ISCA members would be granted exemption from all four papers of the ICAI

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Foundation Course and specified papers of the ICAI Intermediate Course, subject to the eligibility criteria and requirements prescribed by ICAI.

Further, the two institutes exchanged a Letter of Intent to work together toward capacity building in Artificial Intelligence, reflecting shared commitment to strengthen AI capabilities across the profession.

WOFA 2026

I am delighted to inform that Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Hon'ble Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs, Government of India and Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh have graciously consented to inaugurate the World Forum of Accountants (WOFA) 2026 in Visakhapatnam.

Let us come together and make this landmark global gathering a proud moment for ICAI and a celebration of India's leadership in the global accountancy profession.

Strengthening Public Finance through Advocacy

As India advances the vision of Viksit Bharat, sound public financial management becomes a logical outcome of translating policies and optimising resources for sustainable development and better outcomes for the national good.

ICAI has further strengthened its role as a trusted partner in good governance, value creation and nation-building with an initiative to acquaint the elected representatives with public finance and governance, through a workshop for newly elected Members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on "Strengthening Governance in Public Financial Management: A Legislative Perspective." The programme focused on budget analysis, government accounting, fiscal responsibility, equipping public representatives with greater financial insight to support informed decision-making and effective oversight. The inaugural session was graced by the august presence of CA. Rathindra Bose, Hon'ble Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly, and the workshop was attended by over 110 members of the Assembly.

New Professional Pathways in Emerging Financial Services

ICAI continues to anticipate evolving industry needs and strengthen the profession's capacity in emerging and specialised financial services, where increasing complexities demand higher order skills and expertise.

A recent example is the development of two Certificate Courses focused on the regulatory framework governing activities in India's International Financial Services Centre. The Certificate Course on Regulatory Framework for Fund Management in IFSC and the Certificate Course on Regulatory Framework for Capital Markets Intermediaries and Listing Requirements of IFSCA have been specified by IFSCA under the respective regulatory frameworks.

Successful completion fulfils the prescribed certification requirements for Fund Management Entities and Capital Market Intermediaries operating in the IFSC.

These certifications will enable members to undertake professional roles in areas such as fund management, investment management, capital market intermediation, compliance and regulatory functions, thereby expanding the professional opportunities within the rapidly growing IFSC ecosystem.

MoU signed with the Department of Higher Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh

In a significant step towards strengthening commerce education, the Institute and the Department of Higher Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh (DHEMP), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote quality, industry aligned commerce education across the State. The MoU was signed during a one-day workshop on "Emerging Knowledge Domains, Advanced Curriculum: Vision, Direction and Implementation", organised in Bhopal on 4th August 2026. The collaboration will support initiatives to make commerce education more relevant, practical and aligned with emerging career opportunities.

All India Leadership Summit

Recognising the growing contribution of Chartered Accountants in public leadership, ICAI organised the first All India Leadership Summit on the theme "Enhancing the Role of Chartered Accountants in Governance, Public Institutions and Nation Building" during July 25–26, 2026, at Jaipur. The Summit served as a platform to bring together Chartered Accountants serving in leadership positions in the Legislature, Judiciary, All India Services, Group 'A' Services and Tribunals, to learn from their collective experience and expertise to further strengthen governance, public institutions and nation-building.

The Summit was graced by distinguished personalities, including CA. Suresh Prabhu, Former Union Cabinet Minister, Government of India; Justice (CA.) Anuroop Singhi, Judge, Rajasthan High Court; CA. Rathindra Bose, Hon'ble Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly; and CA. Gourav Vallabh, Part-Time Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.

Strengthening the Financial Reporting Ecosystem

ICAI continues to work closely with regulators and stakeholders to strengthen the quality and credibility of financial reporting and auditing. Recently, ICAI in collaboration with the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), organised a one-day workshop on "Creating a Better Financial Reporting Ecosystem" on 19th August 2026 in Ahmedabad. The workshop brought together the profession and the regulator to deliberate on key aspects of financial reporting and audit quality. The

workshop was graced by Shri Nitin Gupta, Chairperson, NFRA, and was attended by 100 members.

Further, the Centre for Audit Quality, ICAI, has released the “*Tool for Audit Opinion Formation*”, a practical decision support tool designed to assist members in evaluating audit findings and arriving at an appropriate audit opinion in a structured and systematic manner. The tool brings together key considerations such as materiality, pervasiveness, and disclosures, while reinforcing the importance of professional judgement and professional skepticism.

Navigating a Changing Tax Landscape

As tax laws and compliance requirements continue to evolve, ICAI is strengthening its efforts to ensure that members have access to practical guidance, current information and platforms that support them in their day-to-day professional work.

The Direct Taxes Committee has released the revised edition of its flagship Guidance Note on Tax Audit under Section 44AB of the Income-tax Act, 1961 (Revised 2026). Developed as a practical companion for members, the Guidance Note addresses real-world issues encountered during tax audits and seeks to bring greater consistency and accuracy to tax audit reporting. It also highlights the larger responsibility that comes with tax audit, recognising its role in promoting credible and disciplined tax compliance.

Complementing this guidance, the Direct Taxes Committee, jointly with the International Taxation Committee, has launched the ‘*I-Kar Pe Charcha*’ mobile application for members. The app will bring the latest publications and developments from the Committees together in one place on issues emerging in taxation practice.

ICAI Strategy Meet

With the vision towards shaping the future trajectory of the profession, the Strategy meeting was held in Tirupati on 5th August 2026. Building upon inputs from across the ICAI fraternity, 92 priority strategic areas were identified across five important areas, i.e., members, students, professional development, brand building, and governance & strategy. The deliberations reflected a shared vision to strengthen the profession in sync with India’s rapidly evolving economic landscape, emerging opportunities and changing stakeholder expectations. It is envisaged that 75% of the actionable priorities will be taken forward within the next 100 days.

SIRC Regional Conference

I was privileged to attend the 58th SIRC Regional Conference, “*DAKSHA: Digital Horizons. Ethical Edge*”, held on 7–8 August in Vijayawada. The conference brought together 2059 distinguished leaders and members of the profession for meaningful deliberations on preparing the profession for a rapidly evolving digital future. Shri Payyavula Keshav, Hon’ble Minister of Finance, Government of

Andhra Pradesh graced the conference as Chief Guest. He praised the profession’s meticulousness, deep dedication and global reputation which make Chartered Accountants trusted custodians of financial integrity. He made a special appeal to the CA fraternity to provide advisory and financial structuring services to young entrepreneurs and startups for the growth of economy. The Conference emphasised on digital transformation, ethical leadership and continuous learning that highlighted a powerful message - as technology reshapes our profession, trust, integrity and professional excellence must remain our enduring edge.

Samvaada 2026, Bengaluru

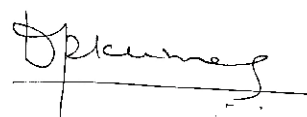
The Samvaada 2026 Conference organised by the Bengaluru Branch (SIRC) of the institute on 21-22 August 2026 provided a meaningful platform for dialogue on the evolving role of the profession in nation building. Addressing the gathering, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri D. K. Shivakumar, recognised Chartered Accountants as “Custodians of Trust” and called upon the profession to combine its professional expertise with public trust to support sustainable economic growth. The conference was attended by more than 1800 Chartered Accountants from across Karnataka.

Conclusion

A maxim reminds us, “*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*”. The journey towards a financially empowered India must, therefore, begin with informed choices and responsible financial decisions by every citizen. Financial inclusion is a key enabler of inclusive growth and contributes significantly to the achievement of 7 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals under the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The movement for a financially literate India must extend from classrooms to households, villages to MSMEs, and first-time savers to emerging investors, enabling individuals to make financial decisions with confidence, prudence, and foresight. It is a collective responsibility that calls upon professionals, educators, institutions, and citizens to champion financial awareness.

I am confident that, through our collective efforts, we can transform financial literacy from mere awareness into a sustained movement for financial empowerment. Let us make financial literacy not merely a national aspiration but a shared national commitment, laying stronger foundations for a confident, resilient, and financially empowered Viksit Bharat.



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