



since 1953

# Madras Motor Sports Club

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## MEDIA RELEASE

- ***World F1 legend Mika Hakkinen inaugurates MIKA circuit amidst pomp and show***

Chennai, September 19: Double Formula One World Champion Mika Hakkinen flagged off Indian motorsports on a new and exciting journey when he inaugurated the state-of-the-art Madras International Karting Arena (M.I.K.A.), here on Thursday at a gala and landmark ceremony that was attended by India's two former F1 drivers, Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok.

Hakkinen, on a whistle-stop visit to Chennai enroute to Singapore for the F1 Grand Prix, was received on his arrival at the airport by Madras Motor Sports Club vice-president Vicky Chandhok and was brought to the MIC for the launch ceremony that the traditional lighting of the lamp and unveiling a commemorative tablet which will be on display at the MIKA circuit.

At an emotionally charged function after Hakkinen, the F1 champion in 1998 and 1999, and popularly known as the "Flying Finn", posed for a group photograph with young karting drivers, he provided an insight into the mind and making of a World Champion. "I like MIKA because it is my name too!" he declared but added on a serious note: "You must learn to lose and enjoy the win, and to control your emotions. As you move up the racing ladder, it is a whole different World out there. There is a lot of pressure from family, friends and teams. So, you must be able to deal with the pressure. But everything is up here," he said, pointing to his temple.

On prompted by Karun Chandhok during a one-on-one interview, Hakkinen spoke at length about his Formula One career, especially his inability to win a single race for six years after debut before tasting success by winning two back-to-back World Championship titles. He also touched upon his rivalry with seven times World Champion Michael Schumacher. "You learn a lot watching Michael though, at times, he can be a bit naughty," said Hakkinen.

Later, Hakkinen, along with Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok, performed demonstration laps on the MIKA track in specially prepared electric karts after the traditional lighting of lamp and a ribbon-cutting ceremony. A bunch of 34 drivers, in their own karts, did a processional run watched by a huge crowd of MMSC members, invitees and Media.

Later, at an impromptu Media interaction, Hakkinen was all praise for the MIKA track which he said can spawn a generation of talented drivers in India. "Karting is a good way to start your racing career, and this MIKA track offers a wonderful platform for kids to make a beginning. I hope they enjoy their karting stint," he said.

Hakkinen singled out Kush Maini as possibly the next Indian to make it to Formula One. "Kush Maini is good. He is doing well in F2. I feel he has it in him to go all the way F1," he opined.

Narain Karthikeyan, India's first F1 driver, too heaped praise on the MIKA circuit, describing it as challenging, but a driver's delight. "The kids have to first learn the track which is fun to drive on, but challenging too with its layout," he said.

MMSC president Ajit Thomas, also present at the Media interaction, said: "We have big plans to conduct major international events at MIKA circuit. That is one of the reasons why we undertook the project besides contributing our mite to promoting the sport at grassroot level."

Conceived and developed by the Madras Motor Sports Club, the 1.2-km long MIKA circuit, designed by UK-based Driven International in active consultation with Karun Chandhok, is the first of its kind in India, and located in the premises of the iconic Madras International Circuit, in Sriperumbudur, about 40 Kms from Chennai.

Incidentally, the foundation stone for the Madras International Circuit was laid by three times F1 World Champion Jackie Stewart, also known as the "Flying Scot".

Built to exacting global standards, complete with floodlights, sophisticated control room and a holding area with charging facilities for electric go-karts, the MIKA will be open to the public for leisure activity and competitions. The facility is still a work in progress as there are major plans to make it attractive for family outings and corporate activities.

Hakkinen said in a statement: "This is my first visit to Chennai, and it's been my pleasure to open the MIKA circuit today along with India's only two F1 drivers, Narain and Karun.

"Karting is such an important first step for any driver today as they begin their journey towards Formula 1. The investment made by the Madras Motor Sports Club into this facility will be a big step towards preparing the future racing drivers from India.

"The layout of the circuit is really interesting for the drivers with a good mix of corners. It will be challenging and fun for the drivers and combined with the latest CIK (the World

governing body for Karting) safety standards, it really is comparable with the top Karting tracks in the World."

MMSC secretary Prabha Shanker delivered the vote of thanks on conclusion of the ceremony that the Titan Edge and GMT partnered the Madras Motor Sports Club.

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## MEDIA RELEASE

- ***World F1 champion Mika Hakkinen to inaugurate M.I.K.A. track at Madras International Circuit***

Chennai, September 16: Motorsports in India is set for a big step up when double World Formula One champion Mika Hakkinen inaugurates the Madras International Karting Arena (M.I.K.A.) on Thursday, September 19.

The inauguration function will also have Titan Edge and GMT partnering the Madras Motor Sports Club launch ceremony which will be attended by India's former F1 drivers, Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok.

The momentous occasion, dubbed Mika@MIKA, will witness "Flying Finn" Hakkinen, F1 World Champion in 1998 and 1999, launching the track located adjoining the start-finish straight of the iconic Madras International Circuit, about 40 Kms from Chennai, thus ushering in a new era as the Madras Motor Sports Club, now in its 71<sup>st</sup> year, reaches another milestone.

The MIKA circuit, which has been under development for almost a year, was designed by UK-based Driven International with Chennai-born Karun Chandhok, advising on the layout.

The 1.2 Kms long MIKA circuit is a driver's delight with fast straights, and flowing yet challenging corners, and built to a global standard that will ensure it is certified to host even World Championship events, something that is very much on the MMSC's radar.

The MIKA facility provides for spacious garages, a control room, lounge and such conveniences designed to provide a comfortable setting for both competitors and spectators alike. The track will be opened to the public from September 21.

With the MIKA going operational, the MIC, which was inaugurated in 1990, will further enhance its status as the hub of motorsport activity in India, encompassing track racing, rallying, motocross and karting.

The MIC boasts of 3.7 Kms long racing circuit that enjoys FIA's Grade 2 certification, apart from a dirt track customised to conduct National-level Rally events for both cars and two-wheelers. The facility also has provision for two-wheeler motocross competitions.

MMSC president Ajit Thomas said: "The Madras International Karting Arena is a logical extension of MMSC's expansion plans to convert MIC into a multi-discipline motorsport facility that will cater to both competitive and leisure activities, for all-comers including the Corporates. Obviously, it is a matter of pride for MMSC to have built the CIK-certified Karting track as part of our continuing efforts to make significant contributions to develop and promote motorsport at the grass-root level.

"We have ensured that the Madras International Karting Arena track was built in consultation with the CIK at every stage of the construction, and MIKA will be the first of its kind in India. The MIKA is a great addition to the existing facilities at the Madras International Circuit which itself has undergone upgrades over the past few years to secure a FIA Grade-2 certification.

"We felt that it was important to not only have a track that the drivers enjoy and will be good for racing and overtaking, but also one that is easy to use operationally. We have created links to the existing paddock and pitlane at the main track to help the competitors with logistics and with multiple track options, we will be able to run both leisure and competition karting."

Karun Chandhok said: "I'm very excited to be heading to Chennai for the launch of the MIKA track. I've worked on a range of track designs around the globe from F1 to Karting with the team at Driven International, but this is a very personal project as it's obviously my home track. It's been designed and built to be at par with the best tracks in the world and I feel like the track layout is going to be one that the drivers all enjoy.

"It's great that Mika (Hakkinen) and Narain (Karthikeyan) are available to join us for the launch. To have both of India's F1 drivers along with a double Formula 1 World Champion as we launch this next big step for Indian Motorsport is going to be very special."

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