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## From the Editor

I had my epiphany on a Seoul subway in 2004. All around me, young men and women rode to work silently, mesmerised by television programmes streaming live into their handsets. Digital Multimedia Broadcasting was just starting off, but South Korea was already one of the most wired nations on earth — more than 70 per cent of its stock trading took place online, and the pioneering citizen-news site [www.ohmynews.com](http://www.ohmynews.com) boasted 36,000 “reporters”. Mobile digital technology was moving at warp speed. Just seven years earlier, I had to struggle with a packet of SIM cards for each Indian city I flew to. NTT had successfully launched the world’s first 3G commercial mobile service in 2001. In 2005, I was looking enviously at the NTT DoCoMo website, offering hundreds of services unheard of in dirigiste India. By 2007, half of Japan’s best-selling books were written in SMS installments on mobile phones. Close to 40 million Japanese now use NTT’s Osaifu-Keitai “mobile wallet” platform for a host of transactions, including keeping tabs on partying teenagers or carousing husbands.

“Telecoms is really all about the future,” says Subhash Dhar, a senior Infosys official who’s written a crisp column in this keepsake issue (page 56). “It’s like building toll roads. You make huge investments, hope there will be enough users, and then move on to build the next highway. You can’t stop.”

Please do not snigger when somebody says “Beam me up Scottie”. Take a look at this futuristic “Mission 201X” video clip at <http://bit.ly/bteditor>. When I watch my three-year-old grandson using an iPad intuitively and effortlessly, or when I think of how voice costs are plummeting, or video-chat with family and friends, or stand outside Harrods and identify which floor carries the best neckties by clicking a few buttons on my phone, I feel a bit vertiginous. The future seems deliciously unpredictable. The only certainty is that we will explore strange new worlds and boldly go where no handset has gone before.

And so we embarked with excitement on this fortnight’s cover package. Digital natives Kushan Mitra, Manu Kaushik and Rahul Sachitanand, nannied



by a few digital-immigrant editors, attempt to chart the new horizons. We’re sure there are many points of shining light in the 3G/BWA firmament that we haven’t travelled to, and we invite readers to write in with their thoughts and ideas. We don’t know what lies



in store in talkative India. We can tell that it will be ferociously competitive, with the iPhone and Android, and Google and Bing and more slugging it out. Are we really going to make 3G and 4G work in ways that will rewrite the business of connectivity, mobility and technology? Are we going to be able to pick and choose from bubblegum machines bursting with thousands of goodies that will electrify our synapses? Or are we going to end up with seething armies of unsatisfied customers who have to content themselves with apps that are doled out by Jurassic operators? We will know very soon.

*Chaitanya Kalbag*