

From the Editor

Turkmenistan's "President for Life" Saparmurat Niyazov erected a 50-ft gold-plated statue of himself in the centre of the capital Ashgabat, eight years before he gave immortality the slip in 2006. The statue rotated through the day, always pointing to the sun. We have not got to the gold-plating stage yet, but we certainly know something about cults of personality in India, from the giant cut-outs of politicians in Tamil Nadu to the statuesque Mayawati. Not long after this edition of *Business Today* appears on news stands, Narendra Modi is very likely to be voted back to power in Gujarat for the third time running. Modi has used the power of communication and the Internet to aggrandise himself in a manner unmatched in India. Whether it is his website, his blog, the NaMo television channel now funded by the Bharatiya Janata Party, his constant social media visibility, or the Google+ hangout – you should see it to believe it – and now even his 3D holographic image appearing simultaneously in ghostly splendour at election rallies across the state, you will get a good sense of what sort of gold-plating is likely to take place if the "Loh Purush" (the iron man appellation borrowed by his swooning followers from Sardar Patel) becomes your prime minister. There is not even a Modi-cum of modesty when the BJP's star campaigner boasts about his achievements over the past 11 years. You could find yourself genuflecting towards Gandhinagar before you know it. Under assault from Modi's relentless publicity machine, it is quite a task to segregate the political economy. Senior Associate Editor Sebastian P.T. tries to peel away some of the

onion skin from page 34. Gujarat's economy, of course, is not a binary tale. Exactly 15 years ago I was listening to Modi's predecessor once removed, Dilip Parikh, talk about how the state was investor-friendly. Adani Exports and the state government had just taken equal stakes in the Mundra port. Shell (about whom you will also read in this issue) and the Essar group announced a joint LNG terminal at Hazira – and so on. You've got to remember that Gujarat had no fewer than seven chief ministers and a *khichdi* of ruling parties in the 1990s – until Modi first took office in October 2001. Parikh put it succinctly when he said: "Whichever party is in power, who-soever is chief minister, industrialisation will go ahead, march ahead. Entrepreneurship will not be affected by change of leadership."

Some revolutions are violent, some are quiet. India's telephone revolution has been life-transforming. Just 18 years ago we had only 9.64 telephones per 1,000 people. Now, at least one in two Indians has a phone, and we are talking like we have never talked before. Our call tariffs have plummeted from one of the costliest levels in the world to one of its cheapest. But like all revolutions, this one, too, will devour some of its children. First movers Bharti Airtel have seized the high ground, but its leaders look and talk like battle-grizzled veterans as they watch the enemy creeping up their flanks. The government, battered by the 2G scam, has used the flop auction of court-mandated spectrum to score a political point with the nation's auditor. But the truth is that the competition is murderous and the long-expected shake-out among the service providers is under way, whether they admit it or not. The telephone companies will have to willy-nilly raise call tariffs in the not too distant future to justify their Brobdingnagian expenditure on acquiring airwaves. Voice – the babble you hear all the time – is not lucrative. Data is, and it is only when data downloads become universal that the money will start to really roll in. The telephone companies will have to brave both the depredations of a greedy government as well as the basilisk glare of the regulators. Not forgetting the super-price-conscious Indian customer, of course. It is quite a tale, and Executive Editor Suveen K. Sinha and Assistant Editor Sunny Sen tell it from page 48. Read it and beep.

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