

From the Editor

Early this month I travelled to Agra to walk barefoot around the Taj Mahal, the only wonder of the world that stands in honour of a woman. Make no mistake. That mausoleum was built three and a half centuries ago in memory of a very powerful woman. She was a confidante and counsellor to Shah Jahan, accompanied him to the battlefield, was an active philanthropist, and ruthless in dealing with enemies of the state. Running my hand over the cool marble inlaid with lapis lazuli and other coloured stones, I thought about glass ceilings and what it takes to break them. Women dominate several fields. Their numbers are rising in boardrooms. They excel in managing complex organisations. Why, some analysts even feel that the US financial meltdown would not have occurred, or been so severe, if women had dominated Wall Street.

There is little doubt that women punch above their weight in entrepreneurship and business leadership. This is partly because they are still a stereotypical minority in executive suites. Only 11 per cent of 240 large companies in India have women as CEOs. An even more meagre 5.3 per cent of BSE 100 board positions are held by women. And the World

Economic Forum, which starts its annual India summit in New Delhi on November 14 — read our curtain-raisers starting page 37 — ranks India 128 out of 134 in gender opportunities. The cover package involved weeks of excellent teamwork by *Business Today's* writers and photographers across the country.

The stories about India's women business leaders are uplifting and inspirational. *BT's* 30 Most Powerful Women profiles major achievers over the past year, starting on page 51.

Inevitably, some of the honorees appeared on last year's list. Some have "returned" to the select roster. And a few are new. This year, the seventh time we have put the powerwomen's names up in lights, we also run *The Next 30*, a roll-call of women who have pushed boardroom doors ajar, achieved a lot in their own right, and are certainly unto the honour born (pg 86). There is a lot to read and digest and marvel about, including what is fast becoming a *BT* trademark — a photofeature that tells the story through images, not words. Don't miss our interview with Ellen Kullman, Chair of the Board and CEO of DuPont, on page 105. Kullman is guest of honour at this year's Most Powerful Women awards ceremony in Mumbai. A member of the US-India CEO Forum, a key participant during President Obama's India visit from November 6-9, Kullman is also a co-chair at the WEF Summit.

The Obama visit sets off a procession of world leaders who will come calling as winter cools a Delhi emerging from the Commonwealth Games (Wen Jiabao, Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitry Medvedev are due to visit by year-end). David Cameron's trip earlier this year means that all five permanent members of the UN Security Council will have courted a rising India during 2010. Obama promised India US support for a permanent seat at the UNSC. He did a lot else too, but it was interesting to watch Michelle Obama as the charismatic power woman during the visit. Something about her confidence and assurance reminded us yet again about why it is so important for us to celebrate the Most Powerful Women in Indian business, not just once a year but at every opportunity.

Chaitanya Kalbag

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