

SMOOTH roads AHEAD

“LIFE IS LIKE A ROAD – FULL OF OBSTACLES, CRACKS, BUMPS AND POTHOLES” IS AN EXPRESSION **ARVINDBHAI VITHALBHAI PATEL**, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PATEL INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED, REFUTES, SAYING “NOT ON OUR ROADS”.

WORDS LISA SCHOFIELD

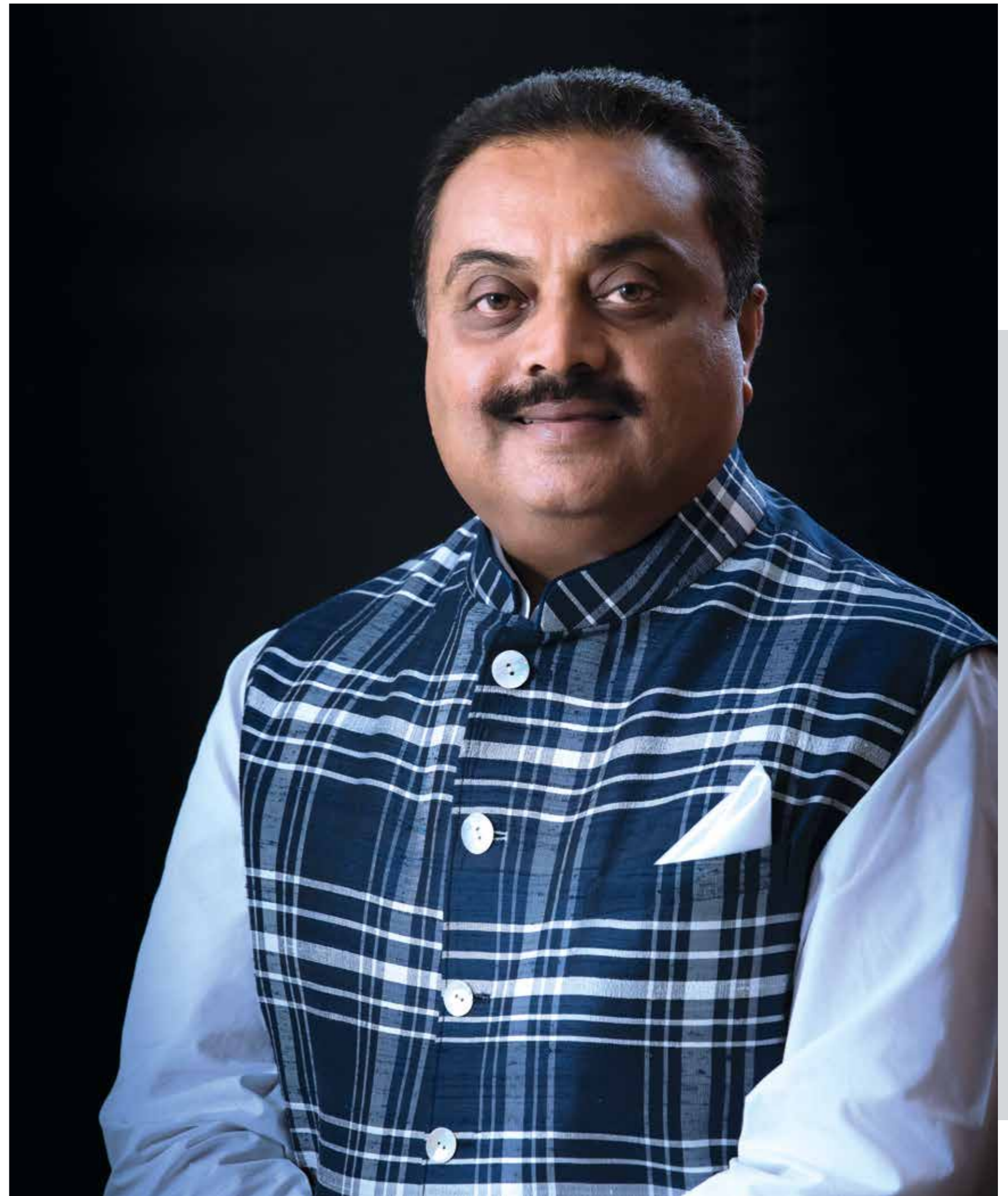
IMAGES PATEL INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED

Each time Patel Infrastructure Limited completes a road project, the team knows that their Managing Director, Mr Arvindbhai Vithalbhai Patel, will drive over the road with a glass of water on his car’s dashboard. “This is my gauge for assessing quality,” Arvind Patel says. “If the water spills, I know there is scope for improvement.”

“Ninety percent of the time, not a single drop spills,” he remarks.

Quality is non-negotiable for this third generation family-run business. The number of major industry awards and projects won is testament to its reputation.

Founded by Arvind Patel’s father, the late Shri Vithalbhai G Patel in 1972, Patel Infrastructure Limited started as a building construction company with a focus on government buildings and hotel construction. “My father came to Mumbai from a small village in Gujarat with a dream to make it big and think beyond the ordinary,” Arvind Patel explains. “He worked hard with patience and perseverance to establish the business and achieve success. I am responsible for carrying forward his vision, to make it big and every day we put in efforts to make it bigger.” »



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While continuing the civil construction legacy created by the founder, Patel Infrastructure Limited diversified into road construction in 1998. India has the world's second largest road network at 5.5 million kilometres, with road the most common mode of travel and transport, accounting for over 86 per cent of passenger traffic and 65 per cent of freight traffic.

“Initially, we faced extreme challenges – we needed qualified staff, material, technology and management systems,” Arvind Patel recalls. “The road to success is always under construction. You must be patient if you want to make your mark. If you don't

accept challenges and make them your own, you will never grow.”

As a result of Arvind Patel's discernment and determination, the business has two arms now: the civil and building construction business, and road and highway construction business. “As far as the civil and building construction business is concerned, we only focus on selected, prestigious and milestone projects that are considered to be landmarks in the country,” Arvind Patel says. Major projects include the new Court Building at Vadodara, Bhadra Court and the new VS Hospital (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Hospital) at Ahmedabad (Gujarat, India).

Diversifying into Road development has been rewarding for us. The Government is also coming up with new initiatives such as the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM), the Toll-Operate-Transfer model (TOT), the Engineering, Procurement and Construction model (EPC), and the Build-Operate-Transfer model (BOT), the latter of which enables infrastructure industries to fetch more opportunities.

“Roading is now our core business and has the strongest growth opportunities,” Arvind Patel states. “Patel Infrastructure Limited is at the forefront of

India's road development. We are proud owners of India's first and only 18.75 metre fully automatic Slip Form Concrete Paver. We have an edge over others to build PQC roads without joints.”

The company has long been recognised for the quality and timely delivery of its projects in both civil building construction and road development. It has completed many projects in record time. In 2018, Patel Infrastructure Limited was awarded 63 kilometres of contract in the first phase of the 380 kilometre-long, eight-lane Vadodara-Mumbai Expressway project.

“We are carrying forward the dream of my father. We are always enthusiastic and excited about the work that we are doing,” Arvind Patel says. “Our passion lies in developing excellent quality roads using the most modern and advanced technology and machinery.”

With the Government of India stressing infrastructure development across all sectors, it is an exciting opportunity for the infrastructure sector. “India is a developing nation. There will be many upcoming new projects and opportunities over the next 20 to 30 years,” Arvind Patel remarks. “Ethics was one of my father's core principles. He'd say, “Ethics provides the structure that not only helps us make a decision that we are proud of, but also helps us decide what is right and what is morally wrong. If we follow ethics, success may get delayed but it will never be denied. It may take more time than others to reach the destination but by working with ethics and honesty, a day will definitely come when we will reach a position where we will be way ahead of others.”

Patel Infrastructure Limited has always proudly adhered to those values, which is reflected in the relationship that the business has established with suppliers. “We have more than 100 suppliers who have been working with us for the past 10 to 15 years. They have faith in the company and we are growing together,” Arvind Patel states.

From Patel Infrastructure Limited's many success stories, Arvind Patel is most proud of his family who have provided immense support in running the company. His brother Mr Pravin Patel is the Chairman of the company, while Mr Krunal Arvind Patel and Mr Parth Arvind Patel are his children and are Directors on the Board of Patel Infrastructure Limited.

They are also leading in managerial roles in the business's operation. “We have a vision that our family will be running the business for many generations and will carry on the legacy,” Arvind Patel adds. Further, multiple generations of families are seen in Patel Infrastructure Limited and it's not just in a leadership capacity that they work. “We don't think of our staff as our ‘employees’, they are our family,” he says. “Besides being part of every official function, they are a part of every family function too.

“Our culture is based on familial values,” he adds. “With more than 3,000 employees, we've created a



culture where they have an emotional attachment to the company – they feel it's their own.”

There are busy times ahead as Patel Infrastructure Limited is focused on strengthening the company's market position through EPC projects, while also expanding the geographic footprint through major HAM projects in roads and highways sector.

“Although I'll look for new infrastructure opportunities, road construction is our core focus and strength,” Arvind Patel says. When asked if he wants to diversify his business into airports, railways, ports or metro, he responds, “I will definitely keep my arms open if I see good opportunities but if I have a cow at home, why would I buy milk from the market?” he laughs. And this means more roads will be built by Patel Infrastructure Limited for Arvind Patel and his glass of water to drive over. ■



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