BUSINESS LEADERS

Gautam Adani: from a commodities trader to ports, airports and green energy

A college dropout who moved to Mumbai as a teenager, Adani built India's largest private ports business and a group spanning energy, airports and cement.

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Gautam Adani, chairman of the Adani Group. (Photo: U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons, public domain)

In 60 seconds

1. Born in 1962 in Ahmedabad; left college and moved to Mumbai to work in diamond trading.
2. Started a commodity trading business in 1988 and began developing Mundra port in the 1990s.
3. The group spans ports, airports, power, green energy, cement and media.
4. SEBI dismissed the Hindenburg allegations in September 2025; a separate US case is pending.

Gautam Adani was born in 1962 in Ahmedabad, one of eight children in a textile trader's family. He left college as a teenager and moved to Mumbai, where he worked in diamond sorting and trading before returning to Gujarat to help run his brother's plastics unit.

From trading to ports

In 1988 Adani started a commodity trading business, which grew into Adani Enterprises. His big breakthrough came in the 1990s, when Gujarat opened up port development to private companies. Adani began developing a port at Mundra, on the Gulf of Kutch. It grew into India's largest commercial port, and Adani Ports went on to operate ports across India and abroad.

An infrastructure empire

From ports, the group expanded into almost every part of infrastructure: power generation and transmission, coal, city gas, airports and data centres. In 2022 it bought the Indian cement businesses of Holcim, Ambuja Cements and ACC, becoming one of the country's largest cement makers. It also acquired a controlling stake in broadcaster NDTV.

> *Adani's strategy has been to build the physical backbone a fast-growing economy needs.*

A bet on green energy

Adani Green Energy is building a vast renewable energy park at Khavda in Gujarat, part of the group's plan to become one of the world's largest producers of renewable power.

Facing scrutiny

The group's rapid rise has also drawn scrutiny. In January 2023, US short-seller Hindenburg Research accused it of stock manipulation, which the group denied, and its shares fell sharply. In September 2025 the market regulator SEBI dismissed the allegations in two final orders, finding no evidence of wrongdoing. Separately, US prosecutors brought bribery-related charges against Adani in November 2024, which the group has rejected; that case is still pending.

Adani remains chairman of the Adani Group. His career shows both the scale that ambition in infrastructure can achieve and the close attention that comes with it.