



## Remarks With Indian Minister of External Affairs Pranab Kumar Mukherjee

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Remarks following meeting  
Washington, DC  
March 24, 2008

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**SECRETARY RICE:** Good morning. I'm very pleased to welcome External Affairs Minister Mukherjee. We have had a very brief discussion this morning of some elements of the U.S.-India relationship, a relationship that has broadened and deepened during the time that President Bush and Prime Minister Singh have been in office and have been working to fully express the nature of a relationship that should exist between two of the world's great, multi-ethnic democracies.

We have had an opportunity to talk about the deepening of our economic ties, of our defense cooperation, and the deepening of our dialogue about regional issues. We had, for instance, a discussion this morning concerning Tibet and the troubling circumstances there, as well as on Burma. We have a lot more to talk about, and the Minister and I will meet for dinner tonight in order to do that. And so, thank you very much for coming and welcome. It's good to have you here.

**MINISTER MUKHERJEE:** Thank you, Madame Secretary. As you have stated that we have covered some areas of our cooperation and shared some parts of the issues arising in our region, shared our individual position. We had quite a satisfactory discussion this morning, but we are waiting till I meet you at night on dinner. We deeply appreciate and recognize your personal contribution, Secretary Rice, for the transformation of India-U.S. relations and giving them a strong foundation for the future. The record number of landmark developments in India-U.S. ties over the last few years would not have been possible without a broad-based convergence of interests and concerns between our two countries.

India is the fastest-growing democracy in the world. It is also, perhaps, the fastest-growing export market for U.S. business and industry. Two-way trade and investment between our two countries is growing along with our cooperation in agriculture, clean energy, environment, science and technology, health and education. A similar momentum can also be seen in our different (inaudible) for peaceful use of outer space and other high-technology areas. We believe that the India-U.S. partnership is based on a bedrock of long-term commitments and a shared vision. During my discussion with Secretary Rice we agreed to maintain the positive momentum generated particularly by the visits of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to United States in July 2005 and that of President Bush to India in March 2006. Several critical decisions were taken during that visit on a wide spectrum of issues important to both countries. It will be our common endeavor to register progress on all of them. In this context, I discussed with Secretary Rice the recent developments related to our bilateral cooperation. Secretary Rice and I shared our views and concerns about regional and international developments. There is a broad overlap in our interests and objectives, and we intend to supplement our dialogue with a closer working-level interaction on a regular basis within the Ministry of External Affairs in India and the U.S. State Department.

Secretary Rice and I will continue, as I mentioned, our discussion this evening. I also look forward to the opportunity of meeting the National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and calling on President George W. Bush later this afternoon. Thank you, (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Secretary Rice, if the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation deal is not completed and sent to Congress by July, do you think you will simply have to give up on it for this Administration, given the electoral calendar?

And Mr. Minister, have you made any progress in your talks with your – the government's Communist allies, members, to obtain their approval for the deal? And how close are you now to completing the IAEA safeguards agreement?

Secretary Rice, if you could just quickly address Tibet? I don't think we've had a chance to hear you talk – squarely address the question of whether the Chinese authorities have used excessive force there. And have there been any more unauthorized passport inquiries?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, Arshad, you managed three questions rather than one. (Laughter.) Let me try and take care of them. First of all, we have had a brief discussion of what we consider to be a landmark agreement, the Civil Nuclear Cooperation agreement with India, which I believe would be good for both sides and good for the future of nonproliferation, as many experts, including Mohamed ElBaradei, have said. And so we will continue to work on that agreement. The Indians are now in a process of working with the IAEA and we'll follow that progress, but we will have further discussions on that matter later. We spoke principally this morning about various regional issues of concern to both sides.

In that regard, on Tibet, let me just say that we believe that the answer for Tibet is to have a more sustainable policy for the Chinese Government concerning Tibet. I've spoken to my counterpart about the current situation in which there needs to be restraint, in which violence is not acceptable, but there also needs to be a day after the current events.

And that really requires a sustainable process of dealing with the problems of Tibet, and the grievances of Tibetans. And we believe that the Dalai Lama could play a very favorable role, given his belief in nonviolence, given his stated position that he does not seek political independence for Tibet, and given his unassailable, authoritative moral stature not just with the people of Tibet, but with people from around the world. And we're going to continue to encourage that dialogue because, ultimately, that is going to be the only policy that is sustainable in Tibet.

And as to passports, I know of nothing further from the beginning of the weekend.

**MINISTER MUKHERJEE:** Thank you. In (inaudible), as Secretary Rice has pointed out, we are interested in implementing the landmark agreement, which we finalized during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and followed by subsequent visit of President Bush in India. But we have some political problems in our country. Currently, we are engaged in resolving those problems. Out of four stages, 123 Agreement between India and the U.S.A. has been signed. The second stage, to have the approval of the Board of Governors of IAEA in respect of India's specific safeguard agreement, we are currently engaged with IAEA. The discussions are over, but the agreements are yet to be initiated and approved by the Board of Governors. In that stage, we are currently engaged with various political parties who are supporters of our coalition government in India. And the discussion is still going on.

In the aspect of Tibet, we shared our perceptions. You are aware of the fact that 49 years ago, in Dalai Lama entered into India in the month of March 1959. Since then, we are providing shelter to His Holiness Dalai Lama. He is highly respected. He is fully free to carry on his spiritual and religious activities. We have also provided shelter to his followers. I understand currently the number may be about 180,000 Tibetans who are provided shelter in India. They can carry on their religious, cultural and spiritual activities. But as part of our law, they are not entitled to carry on any political activities, as Indian citizens also cannot carry on any political activities which are inimical to any friendly countries or which can disturb the relationship between India and any other country. And all of them are to accept the law of the land, including the efforts to cross the international borders. And Tibetan refugees are also subjected to the law of the land. We have expressed our concern in parliament about the latest development. We do hope it will be possible to resolve the issue through peaceful dialogue between the parties concerned. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Dr. Rice, what is your take on the latest challenge in Indo-U.S. relations? I mean, Speaker Pelosi's indiscretion in criticizing China on Indian soil, which many Indians have disapproved of.

And to you, Mr. Mukherjee, why are you allowing the Dalai Lama to let the Americans fire on China from Indian shoulders in violation of the Dalai Lama's longstanding commitment not to engage in political activity?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me first set aside the premise that there is some problem in Indo-U.S. relations. I don't believe that there is. Speaker Pelosi spoke with the Dalai Lama, as the President has spoken with the Dalai Lama, most recently in October when he was here to receive a Congressional Medal of Honor, our highest civilian medal. He is somebody who is respected. The Speaker respects him. The President respects him. And at this particular point in time, to have contact with him, I think, is a good thing, not a bad thing because he is a moderate voice on these issues and he is a voice that, frankly, I hope the Chinese will listen to more.

**MINISTER MUKHERJEE:** I think in respect of Tibet, I have already expressed my views.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much.

**MINISTER MUKHERJEE:** Thank you.

Released on March 24, 2008

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