



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
February 24, 2006

Interview of the President by Doordarshan, India

The Map Room

11:18 A.M. EST

Q Well, Mr. President, how is your strategy partnership with India is going to shape up during the forthcoming visit?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, our strategic partnership had a great start, or a great impetus, when your Prime Minister came to visit here in Washington. We had a wonderful visit. And one of the important things about diplomacy is to get to know your counterpart. And I got to know the Prime Minister and admire him as really a decent fellow who is smart and capable.

And this visit will help foster not only the personal relationship, though, but a strategic partnership that is growing all the time. And it's one that is very important for the American people, and I think the people of India. This relationship between the United States and India can produce good results for our people, but also will enable us to achieve some international objectives, as well.

Q Well, in the context of excellent bilateral relations, which you have just mentioned, I think, what's your take on the civilian nuclear program?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's a tough issue. It's a tough issue for the Prime Minister, I understand that, and it's a tough issue for me. I knew it was going to be a hard issue, because we have to convince -- both of us have to convince our respective people it's in the interest to have a civilian nuclear program supported by the United States and India, as well as a civilian nuclear program that's separate from a military program in India.

And I understood the politics was going to be difficult, and there's still work to be done. We've just got to continue to come up with an agreement that both of us can live with. But the relationship is broader than just the civilian nuclear issue. I've told the American people we want India to develop a civilian nuclear power program. We're all kind of connected globally, particularly when it comes to the price of energy. And the more nuclear power used by great emerging democracies and economies like India, the better off we'll all be.

Q Well, there's an impression, as reflected in the U.S. media, that you are surrendering your interests while proposing to supply civilian nuclear technology to India. What do you tell them?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I tell them it's in the interests of the world that India have a nuclear power industry. On the other hand, it's also very important for India to understand our concerns about making sure that there's a -- that a civilian program is separate from the military, and there's the IAEA safeguards. And again, we're breaking some new ground. I'm not surprised that it's difficult to reach a consensus. And we'll keep trying and working at it.

The key thing is, though, that the people of India understand that our relationship is a vital relationship. And it's vital on a variety of fronts. It's vital when it comes to commerce and trade and prosperity, it's vital on fighting the war on terror. I mean, the people of India know what terror is all about -- you've been hit before. And it's vital on working together to achieve a more peaceful world. And so I'm really looking forward to this trip. It's going to be exciting for us.

Q I think the -- terrorism is one area a joint working group has been working excellently, even before the unfortunate incident of 9/11, between India and U.S. But the terrorist training camps and training infrastructure in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, has not been totally dismantled. How about a -- and from the Pak-Afghan border, sir, also, troops are being -- your troops are being targeted. So how --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, listen, I understand the war on terror is universal, and it's very important for all of us to work together to stop the advance and the goals of these terrorists. And you bring up Pakistan -- it's an interesting moment in our relationships with each other. It used to be that if America were close to Pakistan, then the Indian government --

Q Yes, that zero-sum game, that is over.

THE PRESIDENT: It was zero sum. And now I think President Musharraf understands that it's important for me to have a good relationship with India, and vice versa. Prime Minister Singh understands. And we do have a good relationship with both. But on my trip to Pakistan, I will, of course, talk about the terrorist activities, the need to dismantle terrorist training camps, and to protect innocent life, because one of the real dangers of the terrorist movement is that they'll kill innocent people to achieve an objective. And India and President Musharraf, as well as our country, cares deeply about innocent life. We respect human life.

Q Now about trade and commerce, which we are mentioning. Well, in your Asia Society speech -- I attended, I heard it, was a spectacular speech you made.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Q So you talked about this Indian middle class, the 300 million, which is bigger than U.S.

THE PRESIDENT: It is.

Q Growing, emerging market and all that. But still India right now contributes only 1.3 percent of your global export.

THE PRESIDENT: Right.

Q So what's the road map?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the road map is to continue to work for openness, opening markets on both sides. Listen, trade, again, this is an issue that takes time to develop. Our relationship is a growing relationship, and we're constantly addressing needs to make sure that markets are open. We are going to have a business CEO forum with India CEOs and American CEOs that will brief us on what more we can do together.

And we're democracies. I mean, India is a great democracy. And democracies, there's constant pressure against certain advances. People have their opinion, and people are allowed to express their opinion. And opening markets is difficult. It's difficult for a lot of countries, and it's not easy for America, either. But the purpose of the trip is to continue to work to open up markets, because opening markets and free trade that's fair trade will benefit workers and families on both sides of the trading equation.

Q Well, military-to-military relationship is again another success story, new heights. It is every day it is reaching new heights.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Marrying of technologies and understanding each other. And what about the same kind of cooperation in the field of defense industry?

THE PRESIDENT: In what now?

Q In defense industry, joint production with India, America, technology transfer.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as you know, there's a lot of technology transfer. And I quoted the example of Texas Instruments having a plant in India's silicon valley, a research center. And that's a classic case of technological transfer. Knowledge is technology, is the advancement of technology. And listen, this country has greatly benefited by Indian Americans, and Indians that have -- with advanced degrees and degrees that have -- unbelievably smart, engineering and different aspects of science and technology. And we welcome the presence of Indian students here in America, as well as the great contribution of our Indian Americans.

But technology transfers oftentimes require knowledge transfers, and one of the things about the relationship that has emerged is the fact there's a lot of knowledge transfer between private sectors and through research institutions, and that's positive.

Q Well, the last question. This is your first visit to India.

THE PRESIDENT: It is.

Q While preparing to visit India, and political negotiations, have you discussed with Mrs. Bush how to negotiate hot Indian curry? (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm going to have to -- I'll have to try that on. I'll tell you afterwards. My one regret is that I'm not going to go see the Taj Mahal. And that's not the fault of the Indian government, that's the fault of the George W. Bush schedulers. And obviously, it goes to show sometimes the President doesn't get all his wishes.

But I am really looking forward to going to the country. I am looking forward to meeting members of the government. I'm looking forward to having private time with the Prime Minister. And I know Laura joins me in telling the Indian people thanks for friendship, and we can't wait to come to your country.

Q Thank you very much. And welcome to India, you and Mrs. Bush. And I think there will be many more visits after this.

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so. Thank you, sir.

END 11:28 A.M. EST

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060224-5.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT