



## Interview With Shirvaj Prasad of NDTV

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

New Delhi, India

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**MR. PRASAD:** Dr. Rice, thank you very much for joining us on NDTV.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you. Very nice to be with you.

**MR. PRASAD:** You've chosen India as your first stop in this six-nation tour since becoming Secretary of State. Perhaps your first ever visit to India. Any significance attached to making India your first stop?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, it really is emblematic of how far this relationship has come in the last several years. The President very much values the enhanced relationship between the United States and India, the fact that we are becoming in many ways important global partners as well as regional partners. And he wanted me very much to come here, and I'm glad that I was able to come here first.

**MR. PRASAD:** But there are still issues of contention. You've said it's a broad and deep relationship now between the two countries, but there are still issues of contention. One example, F-16 sales, for example, to Pakistan. Is that an announcement that you are likely to make in Islamabad?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, there are always going to be issues of disagreement, even among the best friends. And we are countries with our own interests, and that will be the case. But we and India have developed a relationship in which there is so much more positive in our relationship than negative, that it's just a new day.

I am here to talk about security relationships, about security concerns, about defense requirements in the region --

**MR. PRASAD:** Independent of Pakistan, it's a relationship --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes, it's a relationship -- we've tried very hard, as a matter of fact, to make the point that this is not a hyphenated relationship, the India-Pakistan relationship; this is a relationship with India. We also have a very good relationship with Pakistan and we are concerned about the wellbeing of both.

**MR. PRASAD:** But it's interesting that you mention the possibility of enhancing defense ties with India. There has been some speculation that the Bush administration may be ready to sell high-end F-16 planes to India as well?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we will talk about defense requirements, and I look very much forward to doing that. We want very much for there to be a military balance in the region that preserves peace. We take note of the warming relations between India and Pakistan, very good for South Asia, very good for the entire region, very good for the world. But we are developing a very good defense relationship with India. We've had exercises. We were very much part of an effort with the tsunami, where I understand that India was able to deploy ships within 48 hours. That's extraordinary. So we have a lot of work to do together, and I want this defense relationship to work.

**MR. PRASAD:** The next steps in strategic partnership, as it's called, the NSSP, could that see facilitation of sale and transfer of civilian nuclear technology, because that's been another contentious issue?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes, well, we will certainly want to discuss the energy needs of India. I understand that this is a growing, in fact burgeoning economy and, like the United States, we are all concerned about how we will meet our energy supply over the next decades and do that in a way that is clean for the environment. And so, clearly, we will want to discuss the broad range of energy possibilities.

The NSSP has been very good for our relationship. We've completed Phase I; we need now for Phase II -- for there to be legislation here in India, and we look forward to accelerating our work on Phase II.

**MR. PRASAD:** But, Dr. Rice, specifically, will there be the sale of civilian nuclear technology? Last week, for example, you agreed to sell nuclear reactors to China. The feeling here is, why isn't that process being accelerated when it comes to India?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we can certainly discuss anything in this new relationship, and I think we will want to discuss this issue. There have been -- and it will be no surprise to anyone -- that there have been proliferation concerns. But this is something that I think we can certainly discuss.

**MR. PRASAD:** You said that the Indo-Pak relationship for you is not a -- your relationship with the relationship with the region is not a hyphenated relationship. But India and Pakistan seem to have made progress. We've got the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus which will start next month. How do you see the relations between the two countries at the moment?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We are very heartened by the increased contact between the two parties. We're heartened by the fact that both now seem to be very intent in being good allies in the war on terrorism. This is a very important element, to root out extremism wherever it is. And we want to be supportive in any way that we can of a comprehensive dialogue between India and Pakistan, which is just very, very good for the region and, indeed, very, very good for the world.

**MR. PRASAD:** But there is a perception here that America remains soft on President Musharraf and Pakistan. He's still not really adhered to the various promises he's made about the restoration of democracy. Can we see some U.S. pressure on President Musharraf for restoration of democracy in Pakistan?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the President has said -- President Bush has said that he intends to make democracy a part of the dialogue with every country, friend and foe. And certainly, we expect more of our friends. We have to say that President Musharraf has done a lot to root out extremism in his own country, to start to reform education. But we do expect there to be a democratic path for Pakistan, and I hope that we'll have a chance to have that discussion.

**MR. PRASAD:** Interesting because Musharraf two days ago in a BBC interview said that he might have lost the trail to Osama bin Laden. Does that concern you?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, certainly, we would all like to find Osama bin Laden. That is something that -- everybody looks forward to the day that you get that phone call. But we also have to look at the progress that we've made. More than three-quarters of al-Qaida's leadership has either been killed or captured. Many of their top field generals like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed or Abu Zubeida are captured. Pakistan was very much a part of that, indeed instrumental in helping to have that happen. The Pakistanis are fighting now in the frontier areas in ways that they never did before.

So while it may be a while, I can never tell you when we are going to find Osama bin Laden, his world is getting smaller, al-Qaida's world is getting more difficult, and that's what we need to concentrate on.

**MR. PRASAD:** Dr. Rice, you reportedly said that the U.S. wants democracy to be an integral part of any dialogue with a country. But in India's neighborhood, in the region, you've got Nepal where you've had a monarchical coup. We don't see the same level of U.S. involvement in Nepal. Is it just simply too small to be on the U.S. radar?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Oh, in fact, we have had very good cooperation with India in trying to deal with the situation in Nepal. Our ambassadors are in constant contact. In fact, our ambassadors came back at the same time. I was recently talking with our ambassador to Nepal and he talked about the daily contact between India, Great Britain and the United States on the situation in Nepal. There needs to be a return to democracy in Nepal. And, as a great democracy, India along with the United States, really must stand for exactly that.

**MR. PRASAD:** When you speak of spreading democracy across the world, it's been important in Lebanon, Egypt. We've seen elections in Palestine. But is this now the problem area, particularly in Iraq? We've seen violence continuing to spiral. Is this still an area of concern for you, that democracy American style doesn't always work?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, it will never be democracy American style. India is not democracy American style; it is democracy Indian style. And the important thing is that there be systems that respect human dignity, that respect the rule of law, that respect the right to say what you wish and worship as you please. And that can take many different forms.

But in Iraq, we have to look at how much has happened there in just the last year. They have not even been sovereign for a year, and they have had landmark elections that have really heartened people across the region and I think have helped this new democratic breeze to spread throughout the region --

**MR. PRASAD:** But you're aware of India's concerns of American intervention in Iraq. Do you now expect to reach out to India and get India involved in the rebuilding of Iraq?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we and the Indian government have been talking now for some time. The intervention in Iraq, the war in Iraq, is behind us. And not everyone agreed with that decision, but everyone does agree that a stable, democratic Iraq in the heart of the Arab world, will be good for everyone. And we are talking to many different countries about, for instance, capacity support for the Iraqi ministries, perhaps some training for Iraqi security forces. And I'm sure that we'll have a chance to talk with India. But India has been a contributor already to help for the Iraqi people.

**MR. PRASAD:** Bilateral trade between India and the U.S. rose 17 percent to \$21 billion last year. You've now spoken of a strategic partnership. Can we expect President Bush -- you've come to India for the first time. Can we now expect the American President also to be here in his second term? If so, when?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm quite certain that the President looks very much forward to getting here in his second term. He wants to come to India. He's said that to everyone.

**MR. PRASAD:** We've been hearing that for a long time. But when are we actually going to see him?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I don't know an exact date, but I can tell you that the President very much wants to come here and --

**MR. PRASAD:** Within the next year? Can we expect that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I certainly hope that it will be relatively soon. I'm going to talk with my Indian counterparts about when we may be able to accomplish that. But you can be sure the President wants to get here.

**MR. PRASAD:** Okay, before I end, I just want to get a quick news point from you. On the F-16 deal, are you going to make an announcement in Pakistan that F-16 sales to Pakistan are going ahead?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I don't expect to make any announcements while I'm here. We -- the issue is to discuss the defense requirements, to -- these issues have been around for a while, we've been discussing them for a while. So it should be of no surprise to anyone that we'll discuss the issues.

**MR. PRASAD:** Okay, let me ask you my very final question, ma'am. Some would say you're arguably the most powerful woman in the world, although Sonja Ghandi, the Congress President, may not agree with that.

**SECRETARY RICE:** That's right. (Laughter.)

**MR. PRASAD:** So it's a bit of a diplomatic question. But there is the question of whether you could possibly still run for U.S. President in 2008. It could be a fascinating contest, Hillary Clinton versus Condoleezza Rice.

**SECRETARY RICE:** I don't know how many ways to say I don't have any intention or desire to run for President of the United States. I never even ran for class president when I was in school. So I think I'll try to be a good Secretary of State.

**MR. PRASAD:** Well, we know you're an academic person, then you're a politician. And we tend to trust academics more than we trust politicians. But any possibility of changing your mind? I mean, how --

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm going to go back and be an academic. Or, if the job is open, I'll maybe be NFL Commissioner, National Football League Commissioner, a job I very much want.

**MR. PRASAD:** National Football League Commissioner. That's the next goal?

**SECRETARY RICE:** That's the next goal, yes.

**MR. PRASAD:** Right. Well, Dr. Rice, thank you very much for joining us on NDTV.

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

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