

# New Partnerships for Prosperity

Text by ERICA LEE NELSON Photographs by SEBASTIAN JOHN



*U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks at the USIBC Synergies Summit in Washington, D.C.*

“We need to make sure that the partnership between Washington and New Delhi, our capitals, will be as advanced and fruitful as the linkages that already exist between Manhattan and Mumbai, or Boston and Bangalore.”

**W**hen U.S. President Barack Obama took office in January, the agenda waiting for his administration was daunting. Many wondered how, and when, he would be able to build on the closer ties established with India after the successful completion of the U.S.-India agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation in 2008.

That speculation was put to rest on June 17 at the U.S.-India Business Council's (USIBC) 34th Anniversary Synergies Summit in Washington, D.C. where Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pledged that India would be “one of a few key partners worldwide who will help us shape the 21st century.” Accompanied by a phalanx of U.S. administration officials, and joined by India's Commerce and Industry Minister Anand

Sharma, Clinton announced a new push forward in the areas of economics, security, education, high technology and beyond.

“In a world where, let’s admit it, frankly, the headlines can get depressing, our relationship with India is a good news story. And I think it’s going to get even better,” she said.

Clinton took the opportunity to inaugurate a new era of relations, which she called, “U.S.-India 3.0.” In her speech, she described the deep personal and business ties already in place between the two countries, and urged both governments forward. “We need to make sure that the partnership between Washington and New Delhi, our capitals, will be as advanced and fruitful as the linkages that already exist between Manhattan and Mumbai, or Boston and Bangalore.”

### A new business model

Signs of this new chapter were all over the richly-carved ballroom filled to capacity with business leaders. For many years, the story most often heard was one of U.S. businesses investing in India. Yet today, in the crowd of shaking hands and flying business cards, the playing field had more than evened out. Indian investors were out to acquire, and Indian companies were out to hire—a sign that in addition to the over 90,000 Indian students in the United States, human capital is fast flowing the other way as well.

Just ask Sandhya Mehta, a lawyer for Baker Donelson LLP, who helps small and medium Indian businesses enter the U.S. market.

Indian companies are generally on the lookout for larger, established businesses with pre-existing customer sets, Mehta says. This is because they often see the United States as a daunting market to enter without name recognition. The current eco-

## Upcoming U.S-India Trade Missions

### Indian Delegations to the United States

**Cosmoprof North America 2009:** July 19-21, 2009

Las Vegas, Nevada

**Print 2009:** September 11-16, 2009

Chicago, Illinois

### U.S Missions to India

#### U.S. Aerospace Supplier Development Mission

New Delhi: November 9-10, 2009

Bangalore: November 10-12, 2009

Hyderabad: November 12-13, 2009

#### Energy Efficiency Mission

New Delhi: November 16-17, 2009

Chennai: November 18-19, 2009

Mumbai: November 20, 2009

#### 2nd Solar Energy Mission: February 15-19, 2010

New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai

#### Medical Trade Mission: March 8-14, 2010

New Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai

#### Renewable Energy Trade Mission: June 2010

New Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai

#### Beauty and Cosmetics Trade Mission: November 15-20, 2010

New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai

#### For more information:

U.S. Commercial Service

<http://www.buyusa.gov/india/en/tradeevents.html>



Left: USIBC President Ron Somers (from left), senior director with Stonebridge India Scott Bayman, Wipro

Chairman Azim Premji, PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Indra K. Nooyi. Above: Delegates at the Synergies Summit.

conomic climate has put many such businesses up for sale—a perfect opportunity for Indian investors. “If someone has money or access to funds, now is a great time,” she says.

“We have worked with some rather small companies who have ambitions many orders of magnitude larger than they are,” Mehta comments, relating the story of a small Indian genomics company that recently acquired a large—but ailing—business in Maryland. That company is now on the road to recovery, and its employees are still at work, she says.

A recently-released report by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst and Young found that in 2007-2009, Indian companies made 143 acquisitions in the United States, with the total value in excess of \$5 billion.

After his speech on new trends emerging out of the gloomy financial climate, Wipro Chairman Azim Premji spoke about his plans to hire more Americans for his U.S. subsidiaries and train them for cutting-edge, high-tech projects.

“We want to localize more and more the people-force which we have working in the United States,” he said. He has also



India's Ambassador to the United States Meera Shankar (above), and India's Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma (above right) at the USIBC Synergies Summit in Washington, D.C.

## Vikas Swarup

# An Indian Diplomat Writes Movie Magic



The Oscar success of *Slumdog Millionaire* raised the profile of India in U.S. popular culture. But most people do not know that the writer of *Q&A*, the novel on which the movie is based, has already done his part in fostering U.S.-India relations. As an Indian foreign service officer, Vikas Swarup served with current Indian Ambassador to the United States, Meera Shankar, in Washington, D.C. during the 1990s. “We didn’t know that Vikas has such hidden depths,” Ambassador Shankar joked in an interview.

Honored by the USIBC at the Synergies Summit, Swarup’s speech was an obvious hit with PepsiCo CEO Indra K. Nooyi. She called it “phenomenal” and admitted that afterward, “I spent a couple of hours in my room trying to sound like Vikas.”

Here are some of Swarup’s funny and incisive thoughts on movie making and the creative process:

### On *Slumdog Millionaire*:

*Slumdog* emerged in a period of tremendous economic uncertainty, and tapped into the zeitgeist of our times. Its effect stems from one central message: hope makes life right. Now that may be corny, but compare that to the mes-

sage of its main Oscar competitor *Benjamin Button*: death makes life sad.

### On his writing process:

I wrote *Q&A* while I was posted in London, and I wrote it in just two months, mainly because my wife Aparna and my two sons had already preceded me to India. So, sometimes behind a successful man there is an absent woman.

### On being a first-time author:

BBC asked me this question, ‘Could you visualize it as a film?’ I said, ‘I couldn’t even visualize it as a book! As a first-time author, what are the chances that what you are writing will even get published?’

### On whether he thought his book would be a film:

If at all I thought it would be a film, then it would be a Bollywood film.... In that film, Ram Mohammed Thomas would still be living in Dharavi, but there would be a couple of dream sequences set in Switzerland and

Singapore...and Ram would be singing songs in Alpine villages.

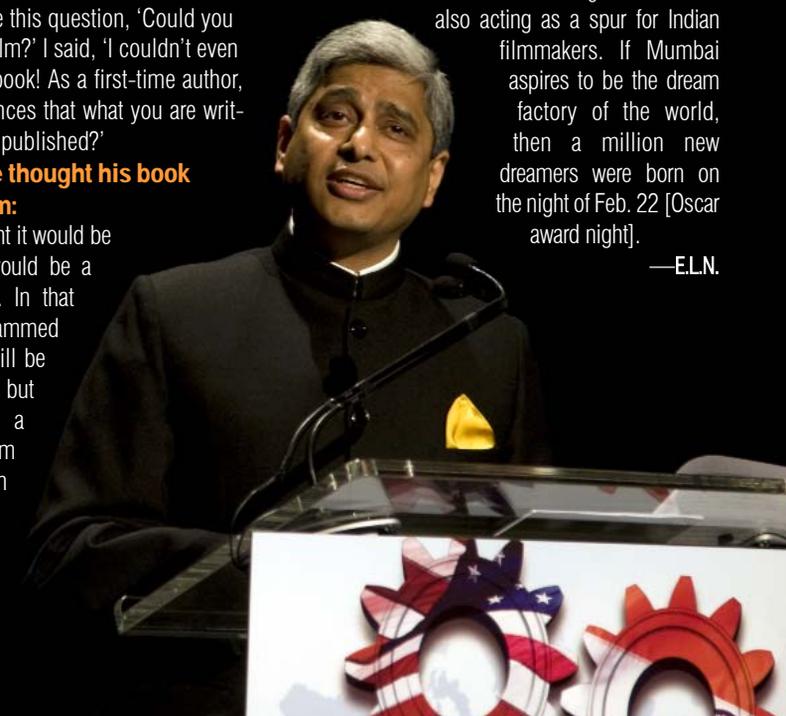
### On the process of seeing his book adapted to a screenplay:

When someone makes a promise that they will remain faithful to the soul of your novel, you pretty much know that the body will be mangled.

### On the movie's Oscar success:

The Oscar success of *Slumdog Millionaire* is also acting as a spur for Indian filmmakers. If Mumbai aspires to be the dream factory of the world, then a million new dreamers were born on the night of Feb. 22 [Oscar award night].

—ELN.





begun recruiting directly from U.S. universities, and has opened up training centers in Michigan and Georgia. Mentioning that these measures will not only help his company be more competitive, he pointed out that they will also allay the fears of some Americans who may be skeptical of the increasing presence of foreign companies.

### Technology on center stage

Meanwhile, S.R. Upadhyay, Chairman of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited, is looking to hire American experts and harness American technology for India's mining sector. He came to the United States especially for the USIBC event, and had meetings planned all week.

"We have resources but we don't have the expertise, which the United States has...I came to have discussions with our friends here, to bring dynamism to the sector," he said. India's miners are looking to dig deeper than before, and also for clean coal technology—both areas of U.S. advantage.

Cooperation in clean energy was a major theme among both businessmen and government officials. U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke praised India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, and spoke about the March trade mission of 14 U.S. solar-energy companies.

"This was the first U.S. government trade mission to India under President Obama's administration, and it focused on exactly the kind of strategic trade development that we see in our future relationship," he said.

India's Ambassador to the United States Meera Shankar also described energy goals as a priority. "I would like to see the nuclear agreement between India and the U.S. transformed into

concrete prospects for business collaboration in the nuclear energy sector," she said. Former U.S. Ambassador to India David C. Mulford had similar thoughts.

"India understands that they now have the challenge to build a modern, sophisticated, well-regulated, national civil nuclear industry," he said, "and that in doing so, they will make a major contribution to the efficiency of their growth and the cleaning, over time, of the world's atmosphere."

### Having come so far

Candidly looking back on how much the U.S.-India relationship has evolved, Clinton characterized the period between India's founding and the end of the Cold War, as "colored by uncertainty." The second stage saw the two countries moving closer under President Bill Clinton and culminating in the nuclear agreement under President George W. Bush.

Participants agreed that the transformation from the 1990s was remarkable. They credited India's economic liberalization, thriving democracy, global trade, and one more important entity, the USIBC. "I have to say that Ron Somers, the president of the USIBC, has brought a passion to his job," Ambassador Shankar said in an interview. "It's more than a job... it's a mission."

Somers participated in every event of the busy summit, despite undergoing chemotherapy. And he was already planning for the future, describing the second annual "Green India" summit, an event centered around clean water and energy that will take place this October in New Delhi.

With tough times all around, Indra K. Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO and USIBC chairman, summed up the sentiment of many present. "I suspect that the key to emerging from this economic crisis as quickly and strongly as possible is strengthening relationships around the world. This very relationship..." Nooyi said, "is a great example of what I am talking about."



*Erica Lee Nelson is a Washington, D.C.-based writer. She and her husband, Indian photographer Sebastian John, married in New Delhi.*