

# SPOTLIGHT

*U.S. Representative Bobby Jindal*

## Exciting Changes in the Bilateral Relationship

By LAURINDA KEYS LONG



It's not just the increased number of vehicles, building and construction sites that U.S. Representative Bobby Jindal noticed as he visited, for the first time in 14 years, the country of his parents' birth. There have been changes in people's attitudes and goals.

"When you talk to Indian professionals and young Indians, you're hearing more and more stories about them staying here to pursue their dreams. You're hearing more about Indians returning from America and other nations, software engineers, business people, investors and others, staying here and coming back here," Jindal told SPAN during his January visit to New Delhi and Rajasthan, with other members of a U.S. Congressional delegation.

He said that change since his 1992 visit is apparent "when people talk about their aspirations, and what they're hoping to do. There's an energy in the nation that's certainly exciting."

There are also exciting changes in the relationships between Indians and Americans, Jindal feels. President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice describe the U.S.-Indian relationship in new terms. "They talk about it as a relationship based on values, where we share a commitment to democracy, pluralism," said Jindal.

"It's not about personalities," he said. "It's not about who happens to be in the White House or who happens to be Prime Minister...whether it's a Democrat or Republican in the White House, whether it's Congress or the BJP here in India. You want the kind of relationship that transcends that."

Noting the changes since 30 years ago, when Iran and Venezuela were two of America's closest allies and most dependable suppliers of energy, and Eastern European countries were opponents within the Soviet bloc, Jindal said the United States has been nimble enough to shift its alliances for strategic and practical reasons. His view of the U.S.-India relationship, however, is that it is not based on temporary expediency but on a solid foundation of commitment to democracy and human rights. "When you look at the alliances that America has formed that have lasted throughout the generations, they've been the alliances like the U.S.-British friendship, because it was based on shared values," Jindal said. "So I was excited to hear the President and Prime Minister use those terms....In both nations you're seeing recognition of how much they share in common and they're no longer viewing

each other through the prism of the Cold War, through the prism of other nations."

Because these connections are being made, not only by diplomats and government leaders, but by business leaders and others, Jindal predicted, "Over the next two years, you're going to have, I think, greater cooperation in not only the field of energy, but dramatic increases in trade and also greater cooperation in international affairs."

Also, he said, "It's a relationship where we can disagree on particular issues and still maintain the alliance." America has many close allies that, like India, have disagreed with Washington's policy toward Iraq, he said, but that hasn't undone those relationships. "In the short term, there may have been some damage, but in the long term I think everybody expects those relationships are going to survive and indeed, thrive."

Jindal represents a district in the state of Louisiana, where the shrimp industry successfully argued for an anti-dumping duty on shrimp imports from India, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries. The U.S.-based International Trade Commission upheld the duty last November, ruling that shrimp imported from these countries were being sold below market value and harming American shrimpers. Indian producers say their shrimp is legitimately cheaper because of lower production costs, and they feel the duty is protectionist. "I think it's important for shrimpers and industries in both nations that there be mechanisms, where both nations can feel there's a fair, impartial process where they can go, an arbitration process, so it doesn't erupt into a larger trade war," Jindal said. He sees it as "a sign of a growing maturity of the relationship between the two nations, that you can have this dispute...and it didn't threaten, it's not overshadowing the larger relationship. It's something that routinely happens with India, but, you know what? It also happens with Japan and the imported beef. It happens with France in the labeling of champagne. So these are the types of challenges you'd expect in any normal relationship."

Americans and Indians are "seeing each other as partners in the struggle to promote democracy, to promote freedom, respect for human rights, to promote open, market-based economies," Jindal said. "I think that's a relationship that's almost inevitable, based on those shared values." □