

# Transcript of External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar's interaction with the Indian Community in Brisbane (November 04, 2024)

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**Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India:** My old friend Chancellor Peter Varghese, Minister Fiona Simpson, High Commissioner Gopal Baglay, Consul General Neetu Bagotia, friends.

Namaskar, and first of all my Deepawali greetings to all of you. And I want to say that for me it's something very special today, I'm on my first visit to Brisbane, and I think with the High Commissioner's support and nagging, it certainly won't be my last.

Now looking back, I must tell you, I think this is my fifth visit to Australia in the last three years, if I'm right. Now, that's not so bad really, you know, for someone whose knowledge of Australia when I joined the Foreign Service was limited to my seventh class geography, to the first test match I watched of Bob Simpson and Bill Lawry team visiting India, and to attempt to get into an Australian university, which was not unsuccessful, I didn't take it. Unfortunately it wasn't UQ, but... so that probably was the sum total of what Australia would have meant to me when I was in my early twenties.

If I fast forward that, maybe almost to the end of my Foreign Service career, I don't think it meant very much more. I first actually came to Australia when I was Foreign Secretary, right at the end of my career, and so when I reflect on this relationship, and yesterday in fact before boarding the flight, I was releasing a book in India called Friends. It was written by someone who highlighted, I mean this is their view, highlighted what they believed were seven crucial friendships for India, and Australia was one of them. And I told them, I told the author that had you written the book ten years ago, I'm not sure it would have been. And don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with you folks. I'm saying this because I'm trying to stress really how much this relationship has changed in the last decade. And why has it changed? I think in a sense from what you heard from Chancellor Varghese said, from the High Commissioner, I would say there are four reasons. One, Prime Minister Modi. Two, Australia. Three, the world, and the fourth, all of you. That is the reason why the relationship has come the long way that it has.

Now you will notice that I mentioned Prime Minister Modi, and I did so for a particular reason. I still remember very, very early on, after he had become Prime Minister, one of my early conversations with him, I was then ambassador in the U.S. He posed a question to me, this was in 2014, he actually asked me saying, explain to me you've been at that time 38 years, 37 years in Foreign Service, why hasn't our relationship with Australia developed? Because it has everything going for it. There is such a natural fit, there's a language bonding, there's a shared culture, tradition, and yet somehow something's not happening.

And I must tell you that day I had no answer. I had no answer because perhaps I had not reflected on it myself. And maybe even if I had, I didn't probably realize that at the end of the day, things don't happen automatically, they need effort, they need leadership, they need vision, they need people, governments, leaders at both ends to keep working at the relationship. So when I present to you today, a picture of this transformation of the last decade, this didn't happen when the India-Australia vehicle was on autopilot. It happened because people have worked at it. At both ends, there's been a realization of the

value of these ties, great efforts at building it, bit by bit, block by block, different aspects of it. I mean, you've heard some of it, the business, the defense, the security, the education. But most of all, I think if you look at these crucial relationships that we have today, when we have a relationship, which is what all of you are, I think that gives the relationship such an effective pathway to grow, that there's really no substitute for it.

So I come today not just to formally inaugurate a Consulate tomorrow in Brisbane, but to actually thank you all, because it is your presence, it's your effort, it's your contribution, which has actually made the Consulate possible. And not least, I should say, I've come to redeem Prime Minister Modi's promise made in public that he will open a Consulate in Brisbane.

Now, it's perhaps a bit obvious to explain to people who live in the Sunshine State what your contribution is to the relationship. But coming here, I must say, I was impressed. I believe today there are, I mean, my figures could be a little bit dated, but I think about 125,000 people of Indian origin who live here, would that be right? I think a little bit more Peter than when you started off. And I'm told about, what, 15,000, 16,000 students roughly in the state. And what impressed me was 75% of the exports of Australia to India are actually from the state. And most of our major companies, I saw a very, very distinguished list, are present here in some form. And I learned today that probably the avocados that I eat in Delhi are probably from Queensland.

So I think, you know, you're doing your fair share, but it will never be enough. It will never be enough because we have to keep working at it. This relationship has just begun. Think of it, the last 10 years, actually, we should treat not as an achievement, but as a glimpse of what is possible. I think what we have in a way done is to put in place a certain framework in which this relationship will grow and foster in times to come.

So what is that framework that we have put in place? I think, again, you know, both Peter and Gopal referred to it. Today, when we, you know, as India, look out at the world and say which are our crucial, really important foreign policy platforms or mechanisms, I don't think there's any doubt that the Quad would rank right up there. And Australia is our founding partner of that mechanism.

In terms of our bilateral ties, you know, in diplomacy, you kind of come up with words which are a signal to your own system, to other people, and the more adjectives you add, the weightier it gets. So when we speak today of a comprehensive strategic partnership today, this is a description. In bureaucracies, it has a meaning. It's not with every country that we would use those terms. In fact, there will be very select countries to whom we would accord, you know, that description of the relationship. And Australia happens to be one of them.

Oh, you know, we spoke about trade. The fact that we were able to conclude an economic cooperation and trade agreement, and the big jump that we see today in the trade, not just the avocados, a lot of other stuff. You know, that, too, is a sign of what has changed, what are the doors that have opened.

But then when one looks at a domain which many of you would be directly connected to, you know, when I look at the mobility and migration agreement, when I look at the mutual recognition agreements that I have, when we speak about the MATES program, when I hear about UQ and IIT Delhi having this strong relationship. In fact, I mean, to me, a lot of this are the, you know, these are possibilities foretold in Chancellor Varghese's report a decade ago, which we actually are today realizing in great measure.

So there is an immense possibility there. And I will come back to this aspect later. But I was particularly pleased that we've just had the visit of our Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, because I do believe that education and research will play a disproportionate role in the sort of knowledge economy and the era of AI into which we are now entering. In my own more orthodox domain, I think there are many other platforms on which we work. I mean, it's natural for big countries, for any countries, for that matter, to deal with each other in the United Nations, in, you know, because we are both Indian Ocean, Indo-Pacific countries, in the East Asia Summit, we have, we are members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

So the short point is actually things are coming together. The structures are there, the platforms are there, the right people are meeting with the right occasion, right regularity, things are happening. And on the ground, I mean, this is not airy-fairy things. These are very practical things, which eventually get translated into numbers, whether they are trade numbers, whether they are education numbers, whether they are research projects, whether they are tourism, or whether it is a joint effort at making the Indo-Pacific safer for all of us. And I would say particularly, you know, the manner in which our defense collaboration has grown in the last decade has been really very impressive. There are a number of occasions where our military work together very closely, and the extent today of the cooperation is something we couldn't have even imagined five, ten years ago.

So if I were to take it on from there, that if we are to work together, if we are to learn from each other, what would be some key areas? And to my mind, I think that three or four would stand out. One obviously is our economic complementarity. Given the nature of our economies, your economic activities and strengths in Australia will fit in in many ways to what would be the requirement of an India that would be growing at 7% to 8% or more for decades to come. So what we have seen to my mind, I think we are today your fourth largest trade partner, but I can see really this expand both in terms of volume as well as go up in ranking. And I sincerely believe that how we increase the economic cooperation encourage more businesses, and I will myself in this visit be meeting the business community to push that particular message.

A second, a derivative of that is actually in some ways the demographic fit, that we are moving to an era where it is important to get the demographic demand and supply right. And particularly because a lot of the key economic activities are actually going to be research and technology driven. This will acquire a degree of importance, even greater importance than it does today. But if I could look at some other aspects, tourism for example, that I understand, I mean I think Queensland is host to five natural heritage sites.

Now India today is making a big push in terms of tourism, considering our potential we believe that tourism, particularly international tourism, still has a lot of headroom to grow. There are collaborations here that are possible. Sports has been mentioned, we look with great interest towards the 2032 Olympics. We ourselves have our aspirations towards 2036. And cricket is always there for us to talk about. And I'm particularly conscious that this is the state of Allan Border, so when we speak about the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, I think it's particularly relevant.

So I want to give you that message that our relationship in a way has just begun. That there are immense possibilities that we have today, treat these 10 years as a foundation. This is a foundation which all of you and all of us together have to build on. We see in every domain, there are, I mean honestly about the only thing we now argue about in a divergent way is probably cricket. But in almost every other area, we actually today see strong complementarities and strong convergence.

Now having said that, I know many of you follow developments back at home with a great deal of interest, so I thought I could spend a little time talking about that as well. You all know we had our elections this summer. And the third term of the Modi government is now approaching about 150 days. Because it is the third term, and I guess in a way because it is Modi, we've actually hit the ground running. If you look at the last 150 days, it's been a very, I would say almost a frantic pace at which decisions, initiatives, programs have happened in the country; many of them with a far-reaching implication. If I were to pick two or three sort of big goals, I would say right now one of them certainly would be how to keep up the pace of growth but make it much more employment driven. How to today become competitive in an overall sense? And how do we board that manufacturing bus that we missed in the past and today board it in a way in which we are not left behind in terms of the global technology progress? I think to me these would be some of the key concerns, not the only concerns. I mean I would say equally, especially after all the uncertainties that we saw during the COVID period today, health security and food security would be very important. So again, many of the decisions that we have taken relate very directly to those.

But the result of this set of priorities that I have laid out actually has been a decision to take forward 12 industrial zones across the country, to double down on infrastructure building, especially connecting it to these industrial zones. And to prepare the human resources which are necessary for that manufacturing capability to grow and for those technology strengths to advance. So if you look, if you recall really the budget speech of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a lot of it was really about growing more skills institutions, increasing the number of tertiary education centers, improving the quality of schools, encouraging internships in a greater way, asking businesses to become partners of this enterprise. So this today is, in a sense, I would say the key priorities of the third term of the Modi government.

Now in the last 10 years, we believe we have made very significant progress. And I would attribute the progress to the fact that we have embarked on a series of efforts which feed into each other, making it much easier to do business in the country. Improving the ease of living, which is reducing the bureaucratic load on the average citizen. Radically improving the infrastructure through a program called Gati Shakti, which in fact has a very strong application of multiple kinds of technologies. Putting in place what has been a remarkably effective digital public infrastructure, and I'd like to share some thoughts with you about that.

Improving the quality of governance overall, and in my view, actually ensuring the political stability, which allows for decisions taken to be implemented in full and for new decisions to build on earlier ones. Now I put this to you in terms of a description, but often I'm in situations where I have to impress, I have five minutes to impress somebody from abroad who wants to know, okay, what's happening in India. So I want to give you that five minute description, actually it's not even five minutes, probably one minute.

I tell people, please understand, today's India, today's India, if I were to pick five numbers, is building 28 kilometers of highway every day. It's building 12 to 14 kilometers of railway track every day, quite apart from the Vande Bharat trains, which have been introduced, which I would invite you to ride on next time any of you are in India, which had six cities with metros a decade ago, which has 21 today, and we are planning an additional 39 today, which has on average built seven to eight new airports every year for the last decade. A decade ago we had 75 airports, today we are close to 150; which, by the way, as a result of all of this, has about a thousand planes on order from the international aviation industry,

which has actually doubled down on its education system. Now this gives you a kind of a snapshot of the changes underway.

Now it's not my contention that those are adequate, on the contrary. Aspirational India today demands that, you know, these are seen in many ways today as basic requirements. So we are addressing a lot of legacy needs, but certainly we hope that the expectations of society actually lead to higher performance and higher delivery in this regard.

Now this is one part of the change which has happened. The other part of the change is probably less visible to many of us. Less visible because many of us come from middle class families, mostly urban. So we don't directly always experience, and I'm sure there may be some exceptions here. We don't always directly experience how the digital public infrastructure actually has delivered, particularly outside urban areas, including in urban areas. But also to those who are, I would say, of lower income and who are socioeconomically more vulnerable. And again I want to give you some ideas of numbers. We have a program to build houses to those whose income levels are low. In the last 10 years, 35 million houses have been built and delivered, which means about roughly given Indian family size, which means about 160 million people are living in houses today which they did not have a decade ago.

Let's look at health. Some of you may have heard of a scheme called Ayushman Bharat. Now the idea is to provide free or subsidized health care for those who are deserving. The users of this today number 530 million, which is roughly, I mean you know the numbers, about 40% of the total population. You know also that there are a lot of people who depend on government rations, on public food distribution for their nutrition. Now during the COVID period, we took a decision that we would expand the nutritional support because at that time a lot of people, in fact, had a loss of employment or income. Today we give direct food support to 815 million people, which is almost two-thirds of the country.

Water, which in many developed societies would be taken for granted, but again those of you who remember some of the circumstances in some parts of India know it's been a challenge. But actually roughly about little more than one-third of the country, 500 million people have been covered by what is called the Jal Jeevan Mission. And even if you look in terms of entrepreneurship, you know the small loans that are given out and a disproportionate number of these are actually given out to women. In the last decade, close to about 350 million loans have been given out.

So I put this to you, that this is not just a society which is changing at a sort of visible level in the urban areas, in those places where you would naturally go to when you go to India. But if you go even to remote areas, if you go out of big cities, if you travel around the country today, it really hits you, the extent of change. I must tell you, as a person who lives in India, when I go to Gujarat where I'm elected and I travel around in the district, which is a predominantly tribal district that I have a certain responsibility for, I can actually see these things happening on the ground. Perhaps the most startling change is actually the UPI, the cashless transaction. We just had last week the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, and Prime Minister Modi was explaining to him how it works. And we encouraged him when he went to Mumbai to use one of our phones to do our transaction himself. I think he bought a Ganapati idol.

But when you tell people that the cashless transactions today in India, the UPI transactions number 12 to 13 billion a month, and the American, I'm giving you a comparative figure, the U.S. does 4 billion a year, 4 or 5 billion a year. So you have to understand today how deeply actually the digital medium has been embraced in Indian society. So when we speak today about how education will change things, how good governance can make a difference, what are the aspirations of our society, deeply digital

people have the ability today to make that kind of big jump, which we expect to see happen in the coming decade.

So I want to share with you that today's India is very clearly driven by technology, by a very willing sort of, I would say almost a passionate embrace of its possibilities. Not just by researchers and academics and by sort of, you can say, big businesses. It has actually been embraced by the people, that if street vendors start using QR codes for payments, something has changed, something big has changed. And to my mind, the possibilities there for the country's progress are enormous.

Now while we speak of technology, I think you would have also heard Prime Minister Modi's emphasis that technology and tradition should go hand in hand. We are a civilizational state. We have a long history, culture, tradition, heritage. It's important that this is nurtured, because at the end of the day, it's basic to our identity. And again, in an era of globalization, it cannot be assumed that this is self-sustaining. So here, too, I would say efforts are being made at a local level, this initiative of what is called One District, One Product, to encourage every local area to produce and market and take pride in what they have historically been, their product or their skill or their craft.

We had another initiative called Vishwakarma, which is to actually give support to the craftspeople of India, because in the modern era, often the crafts tend to disappear, they are overwhelmed by industrial-scale production. Or the decision we just took a few weeks ago of giving more languages the status of classical languages and promoting their teaching and their spread. So for us, it's important that we foster technology, we take the country forward using technology and using all the tools and opportunities it provides, but at the same time, we also nurture our traditions, we maintain our culture, and we keep, in a sense, the balance between the two.

Now, having said that, I want to come back really to the foreign policy domain. I think perhaps it was the High Commissioner who mentioned that for us, foreign policy is just, it's not only a business of interacting with other countries. India will grow, India is growing, but India wants to grow with the world. When we look at the world, we see opportunities, we are optimistic. There may be problems, but overall, we think the world has goodwill, the world has a desire to work with India. We see a sentiment overall in the world for India to succeed, and it's important we harness that sentiment.

So a lot of what we do with the world today is really to explore opportunities with the world. Education and research is one example of that. Another, and again, this is a very interesting phenomenon, which is gathering steam in India. There are an estimated 1,800 to 2,000 global capability centers which have been set up by foreign companies in India, where people, in a sense, are part of a global workforce, but located in India. And there is, in fact, I think a report, a Deloitte report, if my memory serves me right, which says that the businesses they generate today is in excess of \$150 billion, and most of that is actually exports. I mention that to you because it's very clear that the world is moving towards a global workforce. In fact, much of the discussions today we have in foreign policy are about arrangements, understandings about how to create, manage, and move a global workforce to everybody's satisfaction.

There are inevitably social sensitivities. That is something we need to recognize as well. But at the end of the day, we do believe that the image today of Indians abroad, the image of being well-educated, of being so personally responsible, of the work ethic, the family-centric nature of our lives, I think the combination of all of this today makes us very attractive in the global workplace. And I think it's important that that brand is developed, that those skills are nurtured, that we actually use diplomacy as a way of growing the global workplace to mutual satisfaction.

And again, I emphasize that this era, this era of AI, of electric mobility, of chips, this will require a global workforce. The countries where there are technologies, the countries where there are demands are not the countries where there are talents and skills. Somewhere this needs to be triangulated and made much more effective. And I think there's a growing realization of that requirement.

So let me finally end again with our own relationship. I, of course, tomorrow, after a day here, I go on to Canberra and then to Sydney. Part of my mission here is obviously to deepen our bilateral relationship, the political side, the defense and security side, the business side. I will be visiting a disaster response warehouse here because, again, when we speak of working together and doing things for the world, those are the kind of things today which India and Australia do. I mean, very recently, there was a horrendous mudslide in Papua New Guinea. And one of the reasons we could deliver Indian material, relief assistance, was because the Australians helped to deliver it to Papua New Guinea. This wouldn't have happened. People wouldn't have even thought of it in an earlier era.

So how do we today keep the region safer, better? How do we work for global good? May sound like nice words. And these are real decisions which require ground activities. So a lot of my efforts would be to keep all of that going. But once again, I do want to say for me, it's a moment of great satisfaction that I'm here to formally inaugurate a new Consulate General in a country where I would surely rank today among our foremost friends.

So once again, thank you all. You've taken the trouble to come on a Sunday evening. I truly appreciate that. And I look forward, Chancellor, particularly to the education and the research side of our relationship. I'm very confident that it will go. Thank you again.

**Speaker:** Thank you, Honorable Minister, Dr. Jaishankar, and on behalf of everybody in the audience, we would also like to wish you a very, very happy Diwali.

I would like to invite His Excellency Mr. Gopal Baglay to now come onto the stage and moderate a question and answer session. We will have some staff from the University of Queensland, Daphne and Rachel, coming around with a couple of mics. So let's start the session. Thank you very much. And just a small reminder, if you can, please put your phone off, that would be hugely appreciated. Thank you.

**Gopal Baglay:** Hello. So we'll take two, three questions in the first round, and then I see a lot of hands going up. My request is, whoever gets the floor, please, the mic could reach them. And please introduce yourself. So the gentleman right at the back, yeah, there.

**Harshid:** My name is Harshid. I am the [Indiscernible]. My question is, what is the golden advice you would like to give to an Indian seed which is being nurtured in the soil of Australia?

**Unidentified Speaker:** [Indiscernible] I have one question for you sir. When we are trying to make a transformation in the society, it's always hard. There is immense resistance to change. And I would like to get some tips and advice from you as to what we need to do to make that change smoother. Thank you.

**Unidentified Speaker:** [Indiscernible] My name is Ram [Indiscernible]. I'm the editor of Australian India News. Thank you minister for a wonderful speech. My question is in relation to the stuff diplomacy around peace, what's going on with the war and India's role in the peace in the region as well as in the world. Thank you.

**Gopal Baglay:** The boy in the glasses.

**Unidentified Speaker:** Hello sir. My name is [Indiscernible]. So it's an honor to be here and I would like to thank UQ and Consulate General of India for organizing this. And my question is, it's a Quad question, Dr. Jaishankar sir. A couple of years ago, using UQ Union as a platform, we launched a small initiative called Global Rates to connect local and international students and educate people more about the climate of society. It's been rewarding to see the impact it has had so far. But as we look to expand and reach even more students, we are keen to hear your insights on how we can get to the next level. Additionally, as a UQ graduate and someone deeply interested in the growing relationship between India and Australia, I would like to know what steps I can take personally on my personal level to contribute to this important addition. Thank you.

**Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India:** Thank you. You know, I'd like to club in a way your question with the first one. Look, what can Indians who come here as students or as professionals do to both contribute in Australia, strengthen the relationship, advance their own prospects? My own sense is that when countries are very comfortable with each other, it actually makes it so much more easier for the people because it's much easier to be a good bridge between two ends which are getting along well with each other than when it's not.

So today, and bear in mind when I spoke at some length about the global workplace, honestly a global workplace is being formed. Global workplace is being formed because one, skills and talents are mobile. Secondly, tasks and work is also mobile. So a lot of tasking could come to India without people leaving India. A lot of work gets done outside India by people moving out of India. So in a much more, I would say globalized work environment, much more mobile work environment where overall the nature of economic activities are actually going to get far more creative in a way because the reality is five years from now we are probably not going to recognize almost any activity which today we are doing. Because that is actually going to be the kind of intensity of change that we are contemplating today.

In this kind of world, I do think that the more you do for your own, in your particular domain or line of work, the more achievements you have, the more respect you earn, the contribution you make. Not just to personal reputation, yes, but to overall branding of a country, of a society, of a people, the more effective a kind of a bridge that you cultivate. And I would say here students, young people, professionals have particularly that responsibility, that the impact that they have on society is huge.

People in the government will do their jobs. We live in a way like a silo. We might make decisions which have implications for other people, but at the end of the day in any society when you think about a country you put a face or an experience to that country. You are all the faces and experiences which Australians will be using as a reference point. So I do think today, if the seed flowers, believe me that tree is an Indian tree, it's an Australian tree, in a way it's a global tree today. That we need to have that sort of larger collaborative kind of vision in our mind.

In terms of the resistance to change, yes, there are two problems really. One is habit and one is vested interest. That people, if you are doing the same thing again and again and I come and ask you to do it differently, your instinct is to persist.

Now if you have an interest or somebody else has an interest in your doing it the old way, it's going to harden your attitude. So one of the challenges we have found in terms of transformation in India and in a way I could say public delivery. Interestingly the foreign ministry itself has been one of the pioneers of this effort. You know when I started out in the government, in the locality where I lived, I was known as the guy who could talk to somebody to get your passport. Because it was very difficult to get a passport.

And in fact I was talking to someone, I mean, this happens to be my contemporaries, you would have a, people didn't even give it in through the formal process. Because you would have touts or intermediaries who made it a business. Now from making it so hard and you know when you travel out, others wouldn't believe it that sometimes it would take you months if not years and sometimes you never got a passport.

Now if you look today at how something like that has changed so dramatically that today people get it within days, there are a variety of reasons for it. One is that you ask them for documentation which is digital, they provide it, you don't have to physically do many of the checks which you had to. You actually cut out the intermediaries who are making a good living in the process. But, you know, it looks so easy, I must tell you it was very hard to do actually on the ground.

Many of these changes were done when I was Foreign Secretary, my minister was Sushma Swaraj. And you know we would keep meeting and we would keep taking feedback from different passport offices about the speed at which they give [Indiscernible]. I mean, in my office I think every week, we get from every passport office saying okay give me the number of cases pending, how many days do you take. Because we know, we know that if you do not make this into a habit, because at the end of the day the person applying for the passport and the person giving the passport finally get into the habit that you're supposed to do it without other considerations, it will happen. But it isn't easy.

Now at every stage you know when I spoke about giving housing or allowing people health entitlements or even giving food. How much of the food in the ration shops actually never reached the person for whom it was intended. Now the moment you make it digital, the moment you have the ability to check, you actually have developed a kind of infrastructure. It still doesn't happen automatically, I mean you still have to change the, you know, and this is where to me one of the good things I see, I like this aspirational India because it will hold people to account. People will not put up with things which they would have put up with 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago and that's a good thing in our country.

The peace question, look right now I mean there are many ways I could answer it, but there are right now I think two conflicts which are in everybody's mind. One is Ukraine and one is what is happening in the Middle East. In different ways we are trying to do something in both. With regard to Ukraine, we genuinely, we feel strongly not just us, we believe that the 125 countries of the global South are feeling the distress, the pain of this conflict, it affects their lives as well. And we think that there has to be some kind of serious effort to come back to diplomacy.

So we have, we are making our effort here and Prime Minister personally is involved in that. He went to Russia in July and then he went to Ukraine in August. He met Volodymyr Zelenskyy separately once in June and once in September. We again had a meeting this month, last month with President Putin in Kazan. We feel that look, the rest of the world should not throw up its hands and say okay let's wait for them to slug it out and one day they'll get tired and something will happen. Because every day there is a cost to the world, apart from the cost to these countries and to the region.

So it is a situation which does call for some degree of activity of proactive diplomacy. We are trying to do that. When we began doing it I think there was a certain degree of skepticism to be honest. I would say today there is a much greater understanding especially among western countries. We are doing what we are doing. We have very strong support from the global South as well for our endeavors.

So we are hoping that through multiple conversations we are able to create some common ground so that some beginnings of diplomacy can resume.

The situation with the Middle East is very different. At the moment the effort is more to prevent the conflict from spreading. And here one of the gaps is the inability of Iran and Israel to talk to each other directly. So different countries are trying to see if they can bridge that gap. We happen to be one of them. But certainly these are both today very worrying situations. And in a globalized world conflict or instability anywhere has implications everywhere. You see that in inflation, you see that in energy, in food, in disrupted supply chains. So that's one of the reasons we are approaching it the way we are.

**Kiran R. Mahale:** Thank you sir. This is a fanboy moment for me as well. And first of all I would like to welcome you in Brisbane. And wish you a very happy Diwali from Brisbane Dhol Tasha Mandal. I am Dr. Kiran Mahale,, Chief Scientist of a company that produces material for defense and renewable energy storage purposes. My question to you is, the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, has introduced a bill in Indian Parliament about the dual citizenship to overseas Indians. What is your view on that and if that is going to happen in reality?

**Gopal Baglay:** The lady in the yellow saree please. Yeah.

**Rekha Swami:** Good evening sir. My name is Rekha Swamy. I am a geopolitically enthusiast. My question to you is, the recent development between India and China, where do you see, do you think the world order is changing and the power is shifting from West to East? And where do you see Australia and Quad sit in this grand scheme of things? Thank you.

**Gopal Baglay:** Last question, [Indiscernible] jacket over here. Peach color, yeah.

Unidentified Speaker: Sir, good evening. We are [Indiscernible] on with your presence and your speech and I hope we can get some more inspiration from you. [Indiscernible]

**Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India:** The first issue about dual citizenship. There are about 34-35 million persons of Indian origin of citizens of India today living outside the country. It is very likely this number will grow because as I said, the global work place is an inevitability which will increase these numbers. So I do think that this is an issue which will bear very serious consideration that what happens when so many people from a society live outside its boundaries. Because, you know, one thing we do that however long someone from India has lived abroad, often it's multiple generations that have been to countries like Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago or even Fiji. They still retain a very strong feeling towards the [Indiscernible]. Now that feeling is something we see as something of utmost value. So we would certainly want that bonding and [Indiscernible]. Every people of every country has that kind of relationship. Often the diaspora can have a very complicated and not easy relationship with the country of origin. So we know today that the diaspora is something of inescapable value for us.

So how do we find the necessary legal and administrative framework to deal with that? About two decades ago during the prime ministerial of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, they felt they had found a kind of a midpoint in this idea of an overseas citizenship. So many of the facilities and the rights which a normal citizen would get were given, some were not. And a lot of what was not given, some of it was political rights and some of it was certain property related issues.

Now here again times have changed. Many more people for example have financial interests of various kinds. So I would really in all honesty tell you that I think this is not such an easy issue to resolve. Because any decision you take also has some downside to it, some angle which a legal angle do you want. Do we for example not discriminate among countries of the world? Would that leave us open to other vulnerabilities? There will be issues. They are legitimate issues. But I do think that in the

committees that we have on external affairs and Mr. Tharoor happens to be chairing one of them at the moment, in other forums, in fact in the parliament itself, these are live debates, they are being debated. And I think at this moment really the best answer I can give you is you will have to watch which way this is going. I am not sure at this point anybody can give you a different answer other than an overseas citizenship which is on the table.

In terms of the India-China, yes we have made some progress. Our relations were really very-very disturbed for reasons I think all of you know. We have made some progress in what we call disengagement which is when groups were very close to each other with the possibility that it could lead to some untoward incident. But that's one part of the issue. There are other aspects. The fact is there are a very large number of Chinese troops deployed along the line of actual control who were not there before 2020. And we in turn have counter deployed.

And there are other aspects of the relationship which also got affected during this period. So clearly we have to see after the disengagement what is the direction we go. But we do think the disengagement is a welcome step. It opens up the possibility that other steps could happen. The expectation after Prime Minister Modi met President Xi was that both the National Security Advisor and myself, we would meet our counterpart. So that's really where things are.

What does it mean for the Quad? Look, the Quad I would say has a bigger purpose. I mean think of the Quad. I mean you have four democracies, four market economies, four countries with a strong record of global contributions. All of whom, by the way, happen to be maritime nations who have found a kind of a common agenda on which to work. This is not a security agenda. I mean the Quad does many things. I mean from connectivity and climate forecasting to fellowships to health. So there are a whole sort of set of activities out here. And in a way you can say because it relates to your final observation.

Look, the kind of expectations that the world had from the United States in the 40s and 50s and 60s, they are not realistic anymore. I mean in the United States, I mean irrespective of what happens in the election, the fact is the United States will its own global contributions relatively speaking are going to be less. Now there will be a deficit. So we have to ask ourselves do we leave the deficit unaddressed? Is it addressed by somebody with a very different vision of the global order? Or do those who have a sort of a common interest and a common vision actually come together? So the Quad is really option three, which is four countries who feel on many basic issues that they have a common viewpoint working together.

But there is, I mean no question that... I mean just the numbers tell you if you look at what were the top 10 economies of the world 50 years ago, 30 years ago, 20 years ago. You can see there is a shift from the West and I think Australian foreign policy has also made those adjustments. And part of our own relationship today with Australia is we also, for us, many years ago we started with something called Look East. This was during Narasimha Rao's time. And then it kept developing from the ASEAN beyond the ASEAN. I think today the, you know, Modi Ji made it activist. Then we took it further saying that we need to, you know, particularly engage the Indo-Pacific countries.

So my sense is India is looking much more towards the Pacific. More than half our trade, by the way, is actually done East of India. Australia is looking much more towards Asia and the Indo-Pacific. And I think that is one of the reasons today why our relationship is so much stronger.

So the last, the curiosity from the cardiologist. Well, you know, I don't know, I'm just thinking maybe there's some formula you and I could do a business on. Sort of a good lifestyle, how to keep your heart

ticking. But honestly, I mean, I don't do anything remarkable. I try to be as regular as I, I do travel exceptionally. But the rest of it, I keep it as normal as I can. The only advice I give, you know, as you get older, you feel a little bit more entitled to give lifestyle advice. I tell everybody keep fit. This is the only, I mean, it doesn't matter how you keep fit. But at least I take an hour out every day, you know, between yoga, between ideally a competitive sport. Because there's nothing like playing against someone to keep you sharp. You know, then you carry it into your work sphere. I play squash. But, you know, or squash, depends on different people up to you. But it's important to stay fit because at the end of the day, somewhere it, I mean, the heart, yes, but up there too.

**Gopal Baglay:** Thank you very much, sir, on that happy and healthy note. Maybe say thank you to you, sir.

**Unidentified Speaker:** I'd like to say something. I'd just like to say.

**Gopal Baglay:** I'm afraid, you know, today's Sunday evening, as the minister said, and we know.

**Unidentified Speaker:** I'd like to say, I'd like to welcome Jaishankar Ji because you come from Delhi University. And I'm from Delhi University. I was, you were in [Indiscernible]for, and I was in Balak Ram College. That was the era when, at the Arun Jaitley was the president. And I was also in the [Indiscernible] and we are from the same year.

**Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India:** I hope you're still [Indiscernible].

Unidentified Speaker: [Indiscernible]

So I wanted to say, 50 years after, I never thought I would meet you in this university. After 50 years.

**Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India:** Thank you.

**Gopal Baglay:** Thank you, sir. Thank you so much.