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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with President
Ramaswamy Iyer Venkataraman of India (Ø)

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
James Baker III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Max Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the
President for Press Relations
Robert Zoellick, Counselor-Designate of the
State Department, Notetaker

India
President Ramaswamy Iyer Venkataraman
P. V. Narasimha Rao, Minister of External
Affairs
Mr. Kumar, Secretary to the President
Ambassador Asrani, Ambassador to Japan
Mr. Saran, Minister of Embassy

DATE, TIME February 23, 1989, 7:30 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
AND PLACE: American Ambassador's Residence, Tokyo, Japan

The President and Indian President Ramaswamy Iyer Venkataraman met for about fifteen minutes February 23 at the American Ambassador's Residence. The two leaders had a friendly discussion focused on India and South Asian problems. (U)

President Venkataraman opened the meeting by saying he was very glad to have an opportunity to see the President. (U)

President Bush replied that he thought the relationship between the two countries was as good now as ever before and that he hoped that President Venkataraman and Prime Minister Gandhi felt the same way. (U)

President Bush said he was intrigued by the improvement in India's relationship with China. The President also said that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would remove some of the pressure in the region. He added he was also interested in India's improving relationship with Pakistan. (Ø)

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President Venkataraman said the U.S. is India's largest trading partner and that his government is very happy with the commercial relationship and U.S. assistance in science and technology. He mentioned India's past purchase of a U.S. supercomputer and noted India was looking to purchase a second supercomputer. Overall, he said the relationship between the two countries was improving. (U)

President Venkataraman said China and India had agreed to form a committee to discuss border issues. (U)

President Bush asked if this was an ongoing committee or one that had been set up recently. (U)

President Venkataraman explained that the joint working group on the border functioned at the undersecretary level. He said that the fact that they had started talking about the border was a great step. (He added there were other joint committees as well including ones that cover trade and commerce.) Venkataraman confirmed that the border was peaceful, without any recent incidents. (Ø)

As for Pakistan, President Venkataraman said that Prime Ministers Gandhi and Bhutto had arranged an accord, the Simla Agreement, which would allow both sides to discuss issues together peacefully. Venkataraman predicted a bright future for India-Pakistan relations. He said the one small problem was the large amount of sophisticated defense material sold to Pakistan. (Ø)

President Bush said he knew India was concerned about arms transfers to Pakistan, but the U.S. position was to help Pakistan only with its legitimate defense requirements. He said that we do not want to heighten tensions or threats. The President then asked if there were current cross-border problems between Pakistan and India. (Ø)

President Venkataraman replied that there was no tension at the moment, except in the Punjab. Terrorists, he said, had received help from the Pakistani side of the border and Pakistan would not authorize hot pursuit of these people. (Ø)

President Bush asked for Venkataraman's views on Gorbachev and changes in the USSR. (Ø)

President Venkataraman said that the USSR was dedicated to the solution of some of the world's problems, citing the INF agreement. He said that the dialogue between the U.S. and the USSR had a positive effect on the world (mentioning Iran/Iraq and other problems). (Ø)

President Bush agreed with the benefits of U.S.-Soviet engagement. (Ø)

President Venkataraman said the Soviets were looking for a nuclear-free and non-violent world. (Ø)

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President Bush asked about the Prime Minister's political standing explaining that he did not want to interfere but was interested as a friend. (U)

President Venkataraman said that Gandhi had to solve many problems; for example, the Bengal worker agitation. He had arranged a political solution to that problem and others. On the economic side, Venkataraman said that Prime Minister Gandhi had also done well. Indian production was up and India had generally averaged 5 percent growth over 40 years despite some big drops in certain years. He said Prime Minister Gandhi had done well in both the political and economic spheres. (U)

President Bush then asked how long the electoral process in India lasted. (U)

President Venkataraman said election campaigns were two months in length, but preliminary efforts could begin earlier. (U)

President Bush asked Venkataraman for his views on Prime Minister Bhutto's standing at home. (U)

President Venkataraman said that India wanted to strengthen Prime Minister Bhutto, who was the main hope for a good relationship between the two countries. India wanted her to succeed. (U)

President Bush agreed. He then asked President Venkataraman about the Rushdie affair. (U)

President Venkataraman said it was barbaric. (U)

President Bush said it demonstrated the extremes within Iran. He then thanked President Venkataraman for having met with him and said that he meant what he said about the improved relationship between India and the United States. (U)

President Venkataraman closed by thanking the President for his time and said that he would like to invite him to India so that they could spend more time together. (U)

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