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democracies, reminding the world that freedom is not a western value but a universal longing.

Mr. Prime Minister, it is not only India's democracy but India's manner of achieving democracy that will forever inspire America.

On my recent trip to India, I was profoundly moved by the visit that my daughter and our party and I had to the Gandhi Memorial. Tomorrow I will be proud to join you as you dedicate another Gandhi Memorial right here in Washington, DC. It is altogether fitting that both our nations honor him.

Martin Luther King used Gandhi's teachings to show America that, while we held principles of equality we knew to be right, we permitted practices of inequality we knew to be wrong, and we have been changing for the better ever since.

Mr. Prime Minister, from very different histories, India and the United States have forged a common bond, arising from our common commitment to freedom and democracy. Our challenge is to turn our common bond into common achievements. Today we will continue our work in areas where the world needs both America and India to lead if we are to defeat AIDS, reduce poverty, protect the global environment, and open the global economy.

We will discuss our common desire to seek peace through dialog in South Asia. We will talk about our common interests in slowing the spread of nuclear weapons and the broader consequences of proliferation in South Asia. At the same time, we welcome India's commitment to forgo nuclear testing until the treaty banning all nuclear testing comes into force.

No matter our differences—and two such large and diverse countries will always have some differences—as long as we are thinking, if we speak with care and listen with respect, we will find common ground and achieve common aims.

Prime Minister Vajpayee, in your speeches you talk of India's ability to cherish its own marvelous diversity. In your poetry, you write of the importance of unity, saying that people of many faiths can have one dream in every eye.

In America, we too have a dream of unity amidst our diversity. If people as diverse as we can affirm our common humanity and share common dreams, surely we should and can embrace common endeavors. Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you again for the wonderful welcome you and your people accorded to me, the members of my family, and my delegation on our unforgettable trip to India.

I hope this, too, will be a great trip for you and that you will feel the warmth of America's welcome in return. But more than anything else, I hope this is the beginning of a long line of common endeavors.

Thank you for coming here, sir, and welcome to America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:54 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Prime Minister Vajpayee was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the Prime Minister.

Remarks Prior to a Discussions With Prime Minister Vajpayee and an Exchange With Reporters

September 15, 2000

The President. Let me just briefly say, again, how very pleased I am to have the Prime Minister and his party here in the United States. He went to the United Nations. He was up on the Hill yesterday, talking with the leaders of the Senate and the House. It's great to have him here in the White House.

I think we have worked hard together to move our relationship from one of too little contact and too much suspicion to one of genuine efforts to build a long-term partnership that is in the interests of the people of India and the people of the United States. And I'm encouraged, and I'm very appreciative of Prime Minister Vajpayee's efforts to lead this transformation.

So I want to welcome you again, and thank you for that, sir.

Prime Minister Vajpayee. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I am grateful to you for your kind words and warm hospitality. The parade was really very impressive. But now we have some work to perform.

With your visit to India, a beginning has already been made. We have to pursue that path. Administrations have been working on different issues, and I understand that some agreements have already been arrived at.

As we discuss this, I'm sure differences will be reduced, and a common ground will emerge. The Millennium Summit was a wonderful idea. But the only regret is that the speakers had only 5 minutes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Although, if they had longer, we would still be up there. We wouldn't be down here talking. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Vajpayee. [*Inaudible*]—only of summit of religious and spiritual leaders were also good idea. Have them come together and discuss things and find out that there are more things in common than the rituals.

India-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, can you say that you have written a new chapter in the U.S.-India relations to—in this Oval Office during this visit of the Prime Minister of India?

The President. You could say that. I'm not supposed to say such things. [*Laughter*]

Let me say, what I hope we have done is moved our relationship in a new direction. It began, I think, with the great opportunity that the Prime Minister gave me to come to India, to speak in the Indian Parliament Building, which is one of my most memorable experiences as President, and obviously, to see your country and its people. I thank you.

But I think that we should look at this as a long-term effort that—I can speak for myself—I hope very much goes well beyond my Presidency and our service together. I don't think it should be another 20 years before an American President goes to India. I think we should have a regular, sustained partnership. We should identify our common interests. We should be forthright about the places where we still have differences, and we should set about trying to resolve them in a very matter of fact, open and honest way.

But if you look at the way the world is going, it's inconceivable to me that we can build the kind of world we want over the next 10 to 20 years unless there is a very strong partnership between the United States and India.

Q. When the next President is in the Oval Office in November, there's a great deal of concern that the kind of milestones that you have achieved, Mr. President, with India—what about the continuity, either if Mr. Gore comes in or if Mr. Bush comes in, in terms of Indo-U.S. relations?

The President. Well, you know, the way our system works, the election is held in November, and then about 9½ weeks later there is a formal transfer. And there is a period of transition there where we have a chance to talk to the new administration. It certainly will be a priority of mine to make the argument that this should be continued.

Now, since the Vice President has been a part of this administration and an intimate part of all of our foreign policy decisions, I know how he feels about it, and I know he will support it. But I would hope this would become an American commitment that would go beyond political parties, and I believe it will.

Oil Prices

Q. Mr. President, you said last week in New York that oil prices were too high, and you raised the prospect that they could trigger a recession somewhere in the world. There have been protests across Europe about these high prices. And here at home, Americans are facing fuel bills 30 percent higher than last year.

What's the economic risk to the United States and should Americans be worried about a recession here?

The President. Well, I think in the short to medium term, the answer to your second question is no. We have worked very hard over the last 25 years to be a more diverse economy and a less energy-intensive economy in a lot of our production. So we have withstood this oil price fight very much better than we did when it happened before. That's in the short term.

Now, what we need to do is watch the situation closely. The market is still sorting out what to do with the recent OPEC announcement. And I think there will be an evaluation of what the production schedules are, who does what in the various countries, how

quickly. And that will have an impact on what happens to the price and whether we can get it down.

Meanwhile, I'm spending a great deal of time on this, keeping all my options open, looking at the specific problems of various regions of the country and the general problem of the oil prices. I hope that before they go home, the Congress will reauthorize the strategic petroleum reserve. I think that's quite important.

And I will say again that I've had blocked in Congress for a few years now my proposals for tax incentives for businesses and individuals to buy energy conservation or alternative energy products, which I believe would dramatically accelerate our energy independence. So I hope that that will pass, as well.

But we just have to watch this. The OPEC announcement and the actions that have been taken since then are not enough, I think, for the market to fully sort out what it's going to do. But I assure you, I'm spending a lot of time on it, and I will do everything I can to minimize the impact of any adverse impact on the American people.

Wen Ho Lee

Q. Mr. President, if you always had doubts about whether Wen Ho Lee should be in jail, why didn't you share those with us until yesterday? And what do you say to Asian-Americans who are concerned that his ethnicity may have played some role in the fact he was detained for so long?

The President. First of all, I don't believe that. I don't think there's any evidence of that. Let's look at the facts here.

He has admitted to a very serious national security violation. And the most important thing now is that he keep his commitment to the Government to work hard to figure out what happened to those tapes, what was on the tapes, to reconstitute all the information. That's very important.

In America, we have a pretty high standard, and we should, under our Constitution, against pre-trial detention. You have to meet a pretty high bar. I had no reason to believe that that bar had not been met. I think the fact that in such a short timeframe there was an argument that he needed to stay in jail without bail, and then all of a sudden there was a plea agreement which was inconsistent with the claims being made, I thought—that raises a question, not just for Chinese-Americans but for all Americans, about whether we have been as careful as we ought to be about pre-trial detention.

And that's something that—you know, in a Government like ours, that was basically forged out of the concern for abusive executive authority, we sometimes make mistakes, but we normally make mistakes the other way, where we're bending over backwards. So that was my narrow question. Our staff has talked to the Justice Department about it. I'm sure I'll have a chance to talk to the Attorney General. It would have been completely inappropriate for me to intervene. And I don't believe she intervened. This was handled in the appropriate, normal way.

But I want you to understand, there was a serious violation here. He has acknowledged that. We have to get to the bottom of what was on all the tapes. But the narrow thing that I want to illustrate here is that when the United States, whenever we hold anybody in prison who can't get bail or who is interned for a long period of time before being charged and convicted and sentenced, we need to hit a very high threshold. That is the specific thing I wanted to focus on. And I think that there ought to be an analysis of whether or not that threshold was crossed, in light of the plea bargain.

But the American people shouldn't be confused here. That was a very serious offense, and we've got to try to reconstitute what was on the tapes. That's the number one thing we have to do for the national security now.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, on the Middle East, is there any reason for hope now?

The President. I think my answer to—specific answer to your question is you should wait; we should all wait and see. Everybody is working hard; no big breakthroughs; no reason for hope; no reason for despair. They're after it. They know they're on a short timeframe, and they're working it. But I have nothing to report, and I'm staying up with it. But we're working on it.

But you should be encouraged only by the fact that they are working. But there are no breakthroughs, no reason for hope, no reason for despair.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

September 9

In the morning, the President met with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel in New York City. Later, he traveled to Flushing Meadows, NY, where he attended the U.S. Open tennis tournament. In the afternoon, he traveled to New York City.

September 11

In the morning, the President traveled to Scarsdale, NY, and in the afternoon, he traveled to Danbury, CT. In the evening, he traveled to New York City and Chappaqua, NY.

The President announced his intention to nominate Toni Fay to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Melvin E. Clark, Jr., to be a member of the Board of Governors for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elwood (Elgie) Holstein, Jr., to be Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael Prescott Goldwater, Hans Mark, and Lynda Hare Scribante to be members of the Board of Trustees of the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation.

September 12

In the morning, the President and Hillary Clinton visited the Douglas Grafflin Elementary School, where they voted in the New York Democratic senatorial primary. Later, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nina Archabal, Betty Bengtson, Ron Chew, Henry Glassie, Mary Hubbard, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Vicki Ruiz to be members of the National Council on the Humanities.

September 13

The President announced his intention to nominate Edward Francis Meagher to be Assistant Secretary for Information Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Philadelphia, PA, on September 17, to California on September 23–25, and to Texas on September 27.

The White House announced that Prime Minister Guiliano Amato will make an official working visit to the White House on September 20.

September 14

The President announced his intention to nominate Sheryl R. Marshall and Thomas A. Fink to be members of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paulette H. Holahan to be a member of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

The President declared a disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by an earthquake on September 3.

The White House announced that the President will attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) eighth economic leaders meeting on November 15–16 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. After the meeting, the President will travel to Vietnam to meet with President Tran Duc Luong.

September 15

The White House announced that the President will travel to Flint, MI, on September 21.