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China's president visits U.S. to improve global relations

China's president, Jiang Zemin, toured the United States and visited with President Bill Clinton — marking a new era in relations between the United States and China.

Zemin came to America to boost his image as a statesman and as a global leader interested in education and technology.

Officially, Zemin said the intention of his visit was to strengthen China-U.S. relations, despite tense differences concerning Taiwan, trade and human rights violations.

Both Chinese and American officials stressed the value of simply holding such meetings.

"The visit achieved the goal of enhancing new understanding, broadening common ground, developing cooperation and building a future together, thus bringing China-U.S. relations into a new historical stage of development," Zemin said.

Zemin's eight day visit also sparked protests from Capital Hill to Los Angeles. China's questionable record concerning human rights violations has been one issue barring American support for China's entry into the World Trade Organization.

Source: The New York Times
(November 3, 1997)

Anti-Asian hate e-mail sent at University of California

An incident of hate e-mail rocked the campus of University of California at Irvine in early November.

A surveillance video caught Richard Machado e-mailing 60 Asian-American students the following message:

"As you can see, I hate Asians, including you. I will hunt all of you down and kill you. I personally will make it my life career to find and kill one of you personally," the alleged message stated.

Machado is being prosecuted, which raises the question as to how far freedom of speech can take affect in cyberspace.

"If you threaten somebody's life in a way that a typical listener will think that is serious, that's constitutionally unprotected," said Eugene Volokh, a professor for UCLA's School of Law.

But in court papers, Machado's attorney argued that the federal law being used to prosecute his client was in effect criminalizing e-mail and free speech.

Source: CNN interactive
(November 9, 1997)



Talks between U.S., China, South Korea to include North Korea

North Korea decided to join upcoming peace talks with the United States in Geneva.

A delegation from North Korea agreed to join the talks after dropping their demand for negotiations of the immediate withdrawal of the 37,000 American troops in the demilitarized zone in South Korea.

The agreement was a breakthrough in the Clinton Administration's efforts to draw North Korea out of its diplomatic isolation and calm tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

It was not clear why North Korea dropped its demands. Officials in Washington speculated that the country's government felt a need to move forward to move forward or risk losing international aid to help ease hunger caused by floods and drought.

Administration officials said they expected the talks to proceed slowly, hampered by North Korea's suspicions and South Korea's financial turmoil and approaching presidential elections.

The talks, between the United States, North Korea, South Korea and China, will begin on Dec. 9.

Source: The New York Times
(November 22, 1997)

Chinese dissident set free, critics call action political

The last time Wei Jingsheng was released from prison was in 1993. He was released, able to visit his family, but then sent back to a Chinese jail.

This time, Chinese officials denied they would release a dissident as a goodwill gesture to President Bill Clinton.

But in the end, they indeed freed Jingsheng two weeks after China's president, Jiang Zemin, returned from a productive state visit to Washington.

Jingsheng's release highlights the fact that China continues to use prisoners as instrument of policy even as it seeks a major role on the world stage, officials said.

"I would imagine this is Jiang Zemin's thank you present to the Clinton administration for giving him full a ceremonial visit to Washington," said Munro, Hong Kong director of Human Rights Watch.

Although Jingsheng expressed his happiness concerning the end of his plight as a political prisoner, he also was discouraged at being sent to the United States to live — away from his family.

Source: The Washington Post
(November 16, 1997)