

# Asia views Bush victory as boost for war on terror

AFP, Tokyo

Most Asian countries yesterday hailed the re-election of George W. Bush as a boost for the global "war on terror," but some asked the US president to look beyond to other issues as he begins a fresh four-year term.

The leaders of Japan and Australia, who developed close ties with Bush and backed the invasion of Iraq, rejoiced at his victory, but Malaysia called on Bush to use his mandate to show more commitment in the Middle East.

"I want to develop Japan-US ties further by giving importance to the confidence and friendship I have built with President Bush," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters.

Koizumi's government, which sent troops to Iraq in a historic step for pacifist Japan, called for international cooperation on Iraq and

against terrorism.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who like Koizumi drew domestic criticism for openly backing Bush over challenger John Kerry, telephoned the US president to congratulate him, just one month after his own victory in an election dominated by security issues.

"This is a wonderful personal victory for a person who I like and who I believe has given strong and resolute leadership to his country and through the position he occupies to the anti-terrorist cause and the cause of freedom around the world," Howard told Australian national radio.

Philippines President Gloria Arroyo, another Bush ally, said her country stands "forthwith behind America in defending the ramparts of freedom, collective security and the rule of law everywhere."

But Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, while

congratulating Bush, said the re-elected president should give his "whole attention" to the Palestinians' plight.

Bush "has always pledged he will continue his war on terrorism. I believe that is what he will do. I do not know if he is going to change his mind or have other plans. We have to wait and see," Badawi said.

Pakistan, which became a frontline US ally after the September 11, 2001 attacks, praised Bush and the bilateral relationship under him but said it wanted "to work towards long-term ties which look beyond the war on terrorism."

The reaction to Bush's victory was measured in China, where on Monday an opinion piece by former foreign minister Qian Qichen in a government-run newspaper chastised an "arrogant" United States for trying to "rule the world."

President Hu Jintao told Bush

that by working together China and the United States play "a positive role in promoting peace and development."

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue later said Taiwan, which China considers a renegade province, was a "critical issue."

"We hope the United States will realize the sensitivity and seriousness of this issue and not send any wrong signals," she said.

In Taiwan, which receives arms but not recognition from the United States, President Chen Shui-bian said Taipei and Washington have a "joint goal to seek peace over the Taiwan Strait."

Concerning another Asian flashpoint, South Korea said it would urge North Korea to respond to Bush's re-election by resuming deadlocked six-nation talks on the Stalinist state's nuclear ambitions.



PHOTO: AFP

US President George W. Bush (C) waves after delivering his victory speech as Vice President Dick Cheney (2nd L), Lynne Cheney (L) First Lady Laura Bush (2nd R) and daughter Barbara look on at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC Wednesday. Former Democratic challenger John Kerry called Bush at the White House earlier to concede defeat in the election.

## Asian papers call on Bush to heal division

AFP, Hong Kong

Asian newspapers greeted US President George W. Bush's re-election yesterday with calls for Washington to overhaul its foreign policy in order to restore the superpower's standing in the region.

The unilateralist tendencies of the Bush administration's first four years could not be repeated if Iraq was to be successfully rebuilt and peace brought to the Middle East, several newspapers said.

Japan's liberal Asahi Shimbun said Bush "should aim to restore a respected United States instead of a hated United States by changing his policy towards Iraq and the Middle East."

On Iraq, it warned that if Bush "continues to give international cooperation only secondary importance and rely on its military might to suppress anti-US forces, the chances of stability and reconstruction will be reduced."

The Tokyo Shimbun appealed to Bush's humility, reminding him that there was still "persistent opposition" to his security policy. "We want him to respect the criticism humbly," it said.

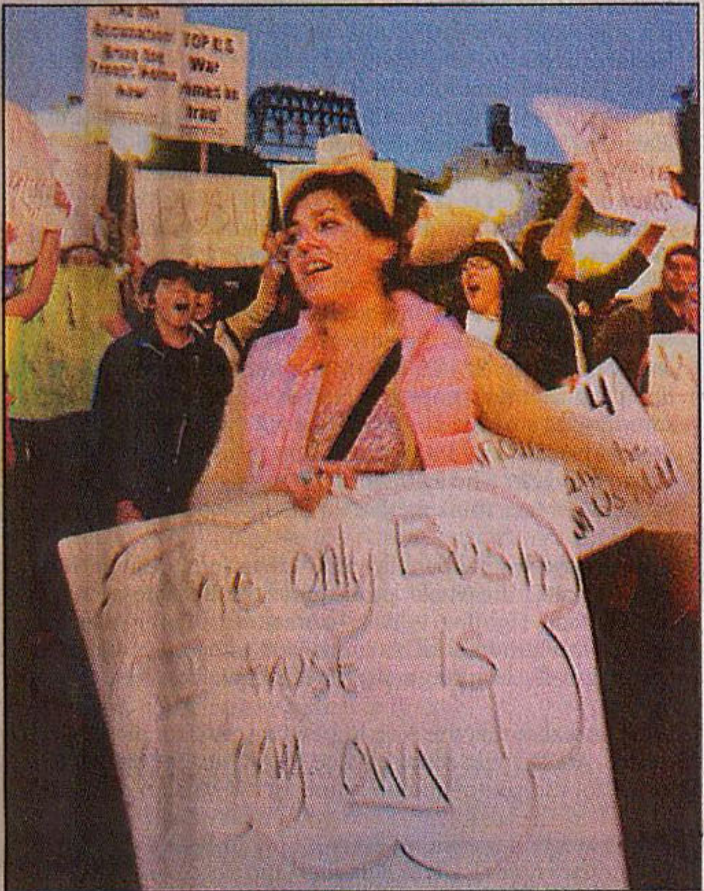


PHOTO: AFP

Protesters shout slogans while demonstrating against US President George W. Bush and the results of the US presidential elections at New York's Union Square Wednesday. President George W. Bush declared victory in his bitterly contested bid for reelection and asked Americans for "broad support" as he pursues a war on terrorism and defends emerging democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Bush should reach out to Democrats, world: US papers

AFP, Washington

After his remarkable and solid electoral victory, President George W. Bush would do well to reach out to Democrats and the world in dealing with the difficult domestic and international problems confronting him in his second term in office, leading US newspapers said yesterday.

With a victory that "has put to rest all the ghosts of his father's one-term administration," wrote The New York Times, Bush should take the high road and work toward a consensus with Democrats over pressing social and economic issues.

After clinching a majority of the popular vote and expanding the Republicans' control in both houses of Congress, leaving him "with no question as to his legitimacy," it is hoped Bush will make good on his victory speech promise to reach out to all Americans, wrote The Washington Post.

Bush should also show US allies "that he is willing to take their views into account on issues such as climate change and controlling the spread of nuclear weapons," said the Post.

"A tone of respect for world opinion could help Mr. Bush further his ambitious goals in the Middle East and beyond," the Post added, suggesting the time was right "to hold accountable senior officials ... who precipitated the prison-abuse scandal" at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

While Iraq unrest did not hurt Bush's reelection campaign, said The New York Times, "it has not gone away ... Finding a way out of the morass in Iraq must be the work of all Americans, and on this issue, the president has a real obligation to reach out to the other party."

The Washington Post hoped that after a "record of blithe indifference to the magnitude of the challenge (in Iraq) ... we hope the president will assemble a team that matches in competence and hard-headedness his own determination."

On the domestic front, the Republicans, by controlling the entire federal government have a "special obligation" to include Democrats in the legislative process and nominate "Supreme Court justices acceptable to reasonable members of both parties," suggested the Post.

## Indian Americans create history in US elections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

Louisiana Republican Piyush "Bobby" Jindal made history Tuesday when he became only the second person of Indian origin to make it to the US Congress in an election that also saw two Indian Americans win seats in state assemblies.

Almost 50 years after Dilip Singh Saund's election in 1956, management whiz Jindal, 33 won a thumping victory from Louisiana's 1st Congressional District.

On the same day, Maharashtra-born Swati Dandekar won her reelection bid to the Iowa state assembly and Nikki Randhawa Haley moved unchallenged into the South Carolina state assembly.

Their victories take the number of Indian-origin men and women in state legislatures -- the equivalent of state legislators -- in the US to five. The other three are Kumar Barve in Maryland, Satveer Chaudhary in Minnesota and Upendra Chivukula in New Jersey.

The fast-talking Jindal, who last year narrowly lost the race to be Louisiana governor -- the equivalent of a chief minister -- bounced back to win a whopping 78 percent of the vote, avoiding a run-off on Dec. 4 by a wide margin.

Of Punjabi extract, Jindal, who converted to Christianity in his teens, is considered somewhat of a

## 'Tough time ahead for Lebanon & Syria'

Britain sees no US war over Iran's nukes

AFP, REUTERS, Beirut/London

The re-election of US President George W. Bush signals more difficult times ahead for Syria and Lebanon's pro-Syrian regime in the face of mounting US and UN pressure, lawmakers and the press warned yesterday.

"To the shelters, it's Bush," screamed the front page editorial of Lebanon's leftwing As-Safir newspaper, raising fears of possible military intervention by the United States.

The leading An-Nahar newspaper said Bush's re-election and the victory of the Republicans in Congress will encourage him to "pursue the same foreign policies that he led in the last four years, particularly concerning the war on terrorism and Iraq."

Beirut and its political masters in Damascus have been under pressure from the Bush administration, which is leading an international campaign to end Syria's military presence in Lebanon and its interference in the domestic affairs of its neighbor.

Relations between the United States and Syria, which has about 15,000 troops on Lebanese soil, have long been strained. Washington in May slapped economic sanctions on Damascus, claiming it was supporting terrorism and seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction, charges denied by Syria.

Syrian government daily Tishrin said that "if the US does not revise the bad ideas of the new conservatives -- totally biased to Israel and hostile toward the Arabs -- the American policy will continue to turn in a vicious circle" in the Middle East.

"The new US administration should admit that its policy of the stick and military force was unnecessary" in the region, it said.

The paper rather called on the new Bush Administration to "be interested in the Arab-Israeli peace process, if it wants its policy to succeed" in the Middle East.

Lebanese opposition MP Fares Sahed said Bush's re-election will "accelerate the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution

1559," which laid out the international community's demands on Damascus.

"Bush's return means a speeding up of the process of drawing a mechanism for the implementation of this Resolution at the Security Council," said Sahed.

"And therefore he would pursue his policy of re-organising a new Middle East from a US security point of view, which will increase the pressure on Lebanon and Syria to implement Resolution 1559."

Reuters adds: Britain, Washington's main ally in Iraq, ruled out yesterday that the United States was preparing to resolve the standoff over Iran's nuclear program with military force.

"The prospect of it happening is inconceivable," British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told BBC radio. "I don't see any circumstances in which military action would be justified against Iran, full stop."

Straw's predecessor, Robin Cook, said on Wednesday that those in the Bush administration who pressed for invasion of Iraq were now lobbying for action against Iran.

## 'Myanmar plans crackdown on Indian separatists'

AFP, Guwahati

A rebel group in India's remote northeast said yesterday neighbouring Myanmar was preparing to launch a military action to drive Indian separatists from its soil.

Yanong has moved in hundreds of soldiers to parts of northern Myanmar, said Kughalo Mulatou, a leader of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) which is fighting for a tribal homeland in India's Nagaland state.

"We're expecting attacks on our bases any time with Myanmarese soldiers building bunkers and moving large stocks of military hardware to the area," Mulatou told AFP by telephone from Kohima, capital of Nagaland state.

The group's statement came a week after Myanmar's military strongman General Than Shwe ended a visit to India with a pledge

the secretive junta would not let Indian rebels operate from its soil.

There was no immediate official comment from New Delhi but an Indian intelligence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Indian troops were being deployed along the country's 1,640-kilometer (1,000 miles) with Myanmar.

"We're aware of Myanmar planning some kind of an offensive against militants and so we're preparing to seal the border" to catch or force the rebels to surrender, the official said.

The rebel leader said the NSCN had "about 5,000 members in 50 camps inside Myanmar with a wide range of weapons like rocket launchers, light machine guns, mortars ... to challenge the Myanmarese soldiers."

At least four other militant groups from India's northeast where a myriad of tribal and ethnic groups are fighting for greater autonomy or

independence have training camps in northern Myanmar's thick jungles, Indian intelligence officials claim.

The last time Myanmar launched a military crackdown against the NSCN and other Indian rebels was in 2001.

Nagaland's chief minister Neiphiu Rio said the government had seen "some (intelligence) reports about Myanmar trying to export northeastern militants from that country."

New Delhi says anti-Indian rebel groups use camps in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan to launch hit-and-run attacks in India's northeastern states where militancy has claimed over 50,000 lives since the country's 1947 independence.

Late last year, Bhutan launched a military operation to drive out Indian separatists from bases in the kingdom from where they had staged hit-and-run attacks on Indian targets.

## Key Saddam trial evidence 'lost': HRW

BBC ONLINE

Human Rights Watch says it is likely crucial evidence for the trials of Saddam Hussein and other former Iraqi officials has been lost or tainted.

US-led coalition forces failed to secure relevant sites after last year's invasion of Iraq, the group says.

They failed to prevent people from looting thousands of official documents from government buildings.

The US-based human rights organisation has published a 41-page report entitled Iraq: The State of the Evidence.

Coalition forces also failed to stop relatives of some of the many thousands of people who disappeared during Saddam Hussein's rule from digging up remains found at some mass grave sites, the organisation says.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga (L) meets Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (R) in New Delhi yesterday. Kumaratunga is in India for a five-day visit during which she will meet her Indian counterpart A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and other senior leaders.

## Iraqis challenge Bush to do better than Saddam

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraqis challenged re-elected President Bush yesterday to bring them the elusive new dawn he promised when US forces deposed Saddam Hussein.

"Bush talks about freedom and democracy but all the Americans have brought is death and destruction. Where's our electricity? Where's our oil money?" asked Abu Ghazwan, a greengrocer in southwestern Baghdad.

"Bush got rid of Saddam, the madman behind the mass graves, the wars and the huge debts. Now let him do better. Bush wants to play occupier, then let him improve security."

Struggling with daily bombings and kidnappings that have plagued the country since last year's invasion, many Iraqis were dismayed Bush had won another term, though few had hoped for much better from his Democratic challenger John Kerry.



PHOTO: AFP

Iraqi children gather along the banister of the top floor of a house they and their parents are temporarily living in, in al-Jihad neighbourhood of west Baghdad yesterday. Some four families, made up of some 30 members each, who fled the restive city of Fallujah 50km away, are living in four houses donated by individuals. US war planes bombed suspected rebel positions in Fallujah early yesterday and five civilians were killed. The daily air raid on the city has forced many families to flee.

## US bombing kills 5 in Falluja

3 abducted Jordanians warn of working with Americans in video

REUTERS, Falluja

US planes and tanks bombarded Falluja overnight, killing five people and heightening pressure on Iraq's most rebellious city, which is braced for an all-out offensive now that the US presidential poll is over.

The US military said on Thursday two air raids after midnight destroyed "fighting barricades" prepared by insurgents in the northeast and southeast of the Sunni Muslim city.

The strikes followed what witnesses said was an intense late-night bombardment of eastern and northwestern districts by AC-130 aircraft and tanks that shook the city for half an hour.

They said the bombardment was the heaviest on the city for several weeks. Hospital doctor Ahmed Mohammed said five people had

been killed, including a woman and child. All had been in a car hit while trying to escape the city.

A woman was badly wounded and a teenage girl lost a leg in earlier air strikes on Wednesday, hospital officials said.

Militants in Iraq issued a videotape of three Jordanian truck drivers shown pleading with their government to warn its nationals against working with US-led forces in the country.

"We will not have mercy on anyone. We will strike with an iron fist whoever deals with the occupation," one of three masked gunmen said on the videotape released to Reuters.

It shows three Jordanian drivers sitting in front of the gunmen under a black banner that reads Army of Islam Counter Attack Brigades. The tape shows close-ups of their passports.

## Annan believes 2005 world may determine UN's future

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said decisions that will be taken at a world summit planned for September 2005 may play a big role in determining the future of the United Nations.

In a report to the UN General Assembly, Annan said that "the decisions to be taken at the meeting may determine the whole future of the United Nations."

"Even more important, they will offer us our best -- perhaps our only -- chance to ensure a safer, more just and more prosperous world in the new century," said the UN secretary general.

The world summit that Annan wants to hold next September 14-16 will coincide with the 60th anniversary of the United Nations.

It is designed to promote the fight against poverty and infant mortality, for universal education, equality between men and women and other issues.

## ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE 9 killed in Thailand's restive south

AFP, Bangkok

Nine people have been killed, at least eight of them Buddhists, in separate attacks in Thailand's restive south in the last 24 hours, police said yesterday in a spate of violence following the deaths of 87 Muslims last week.

Two state railway workers, a policeman and a former official were shot dead early Thursday, while a Buddhist monk from Songkhla province was in a critical condition after being shot by a man on a motorbike.

Police said the attacks followed the deaths of five other people Wednesday.

Most of the deaths occurred in Narathiwat province where 78 Muslims suffocated or were crushed after they were piled into military trucks last week following a demonstration at Tak Bai township.

Six others were shot dead by security forces at the demonstration and three more drowned.

Police said the railway workers were killed by gunmen in Narathiwat province at about 9:00 am (0200 GMT) and shortly afterwards a 61-year-old former district official was shot dead at his Pattani province fruit plantation. A policeman was gunned down earlier in a neighbouring province.

On Wednesday gunmen broke into a police sergeant's house in Songkhla province and shot him dead after a 75-year-old mother and her 39-year-old son were killed in a separate shooting at their grocery shop in Narathiwat province.

In the same province a 40-year-old man was killed during an attack that left his 15-year-old son injured while police also found the unidentified body of a man in his late 30s who had been shot dead.