

# Clinton tells Asians U.S. position strong

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — On his first overseas trip since the elections, President Clinton assured anxious Asian leaders Sunday that America's foreign policy will not be shaken by the Republican landslide in Congress.

"The position of the United States is certainly just as strong as it ever has been," Clinton said, setting the stage for a summit on expanding trade with Asia's booming economies.

Organizers hope leaders of 18 Pacific and Asian nations attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum will agree to free trade in the region by 2020, though China and Malaysia are resisting.

In advance of the summit, Clinton was holding one-on-one talks Monday with the leaders of China, Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Disputes over human rights and

trade barriers were expected to be high on the agenda for Clinton's second meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in a year.

Frictions eased somewhat after Clinton granted most-favored-nation trade status to China, and Beijing has agreed to several business deals, including a \$1.6 billion purchase of American passenger aircraft.

Talks with Japan and South Korea were likely to center on trade and North Korea's agreement to freeze and ultimately dismantle facilities suspected of being capable of producing nuclear weapons.

Questions about Clinton's political standing and the impact of last week's historic GOP wins followed the president on a fast-paced state visit Sunday to the Philippines, the first by an American president in 19 years.

Before flying to Indonesia, Clinton

commemorated World War II victories in the Pacific and toured bomb-ravaged Corregidor, the scene of fierce fighting and Allied humiliation a half-century ago. The island fortress in Manila Bay was captured by Japan after Gen. Douglas MacArthur, un-

*"These achievements have apparently not had the recognition that they deserve in your country."*

**FIDEL RAMOS**

Philippine President

der orders from Franklin D. Roosevelt, fled to Australia, pledging, "I shall return."

"Gen. MacArthur did return, and so would freedom," Clinton said at the Manila American Cemetery containing the graves of 17,206 fallen servicemen. "Countless horrors lay in the way, including the butchery of house-to-house fighting in Manila."

Warmly toasting Clinton later at Malacanang Palace, Philippine President Fidel Ramos sounded regretful about Clinton's election setbacks.

Praising the president's foreign policy and economic record, Ramos said, "These achievements have apparently not had the recognition that they deserve in your country."

Quoting scripture, Ramos assured Clinton, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Secretary of State Warren Christopher, traveling in Asia

before Clinton arrived, encountered near universal concern about the election impact, officials said.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was asked about the elections during a meeting with Philippine relief workers.

"I don't know yet exactly what the message from the voters was," she replied. Her uncertainty contrasted with Clinton's statement last week that voters "sent us a clear message — I got it."

Commenting on the election's impact on world affairs during a sweltering news conference with Ramos, Clinton said, "I don't expect it to have any impact on our foreign policy."

"The foreign policies I have pursued, particularly the mission I'm now on, have enjoyed wide bipartisan support among centrists in both parties," he said.

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**Election revealed voters' gender gap**

WASHINGTON — If women voters had prevailed in the mid-term elections, the Senate would have remained in Democratic hands and several governor's seats would have gone to Democrats instead of Republicans.

The election saw one of the strongest gender gaps in years, exit polls indicated, as men hardened their conservative views and showed more affinity for the Republican message of smaller government, less spending on social programs and anti-taxation.

Across the country, men — predominantly white men — voted heavily Republican.

Democrats sifting through the lessons of last week's election are faced with a reality that men are steadily defecting. In exit polls, 37 percent of men identified themselves as Republicans, 31 percent as Democrats and 31 percent as independents. Four years ago, they were evenly divided between the parties at 34 percent each and 29 percent independent.

Among women, however, 42 percent said they were Democrats, roughly the same split as in the 1990 elections.

"This is something that's been building over the past decade and a half ... as the parties became more polarized around issues and the choices became clear," said Susan Carroll, senior research associate at the Rutgers University Center for the American Woman and Politics.

"Through the 1980s and into '90s, men have become more conservative and more Republican, and women have stayed as tied to the Democratic Party as they were going into the '80s."

In virtually every gubernatorial and Senate race last week, women supported Democrats more strongly than men did — even in the cases where women ended up voting overall to elect the Republican.

The GOP takeover of the House was helped by the 57 percent male preference for Republicans compared with a 54 percent preference by women for Democrats. Democratic men crossed over more often to vote for Republican candidates than did Democratic women.

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