

US sees 'good way forward' with Pakistan's new president

The United States has welcomed the election of Asif Ali Zardari as the civilian president of Pakistan and said it was a positive sign for the civilian government of Washington's ally in the fight against terrorism.

'The civilian government of Pakistan is something that we have welcomed after the free and fair elections. And now, with the new president, I think we have got a good way forward,' Rice told reporters on the way to from Tunisia to Algeria.

Asif Ali Zardari, the 53-year-old widower of slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, was elected president of Pakistan Saturday by the country's lawmakers. He replaces General Pervez Musharraf, who resigned last month to avoid impeachment in parliament.

'I was impressed by some of the things that he said about the challenges that Pakistan faces, about the centrality of fighting terrorism, about the fact that the terrorism fight is Pakistan's fight, and also his very strong words of friendship and alliance with the United States,' Rice said.

After a historic visit to Libya on Friday, Rice headed to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Zardari is a controversial figure in Pakistan politics. He is known as 'Mr. 10 percent' in reference to the percentage of kickbacks he received on government contracts during his wife's prime ministerial terms in the 1990s.

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