



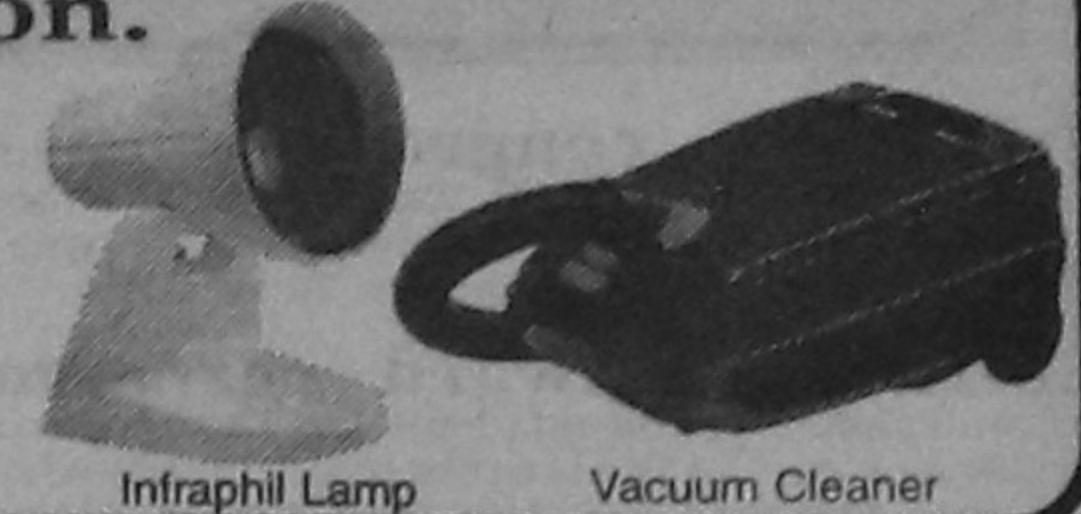
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US move to revive military relations with UN

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: The US military is resuming high-level contacts with UN peacekeeping officials after years of strained relations over the debacle in Somalia and the US failure to pay its UN debt, reports AP.

US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke said in an interview Friday that both sides were rebuilding a relationship that in recent years had 'more or less dried up.'

'We're trying to use Pentagon know-how to help the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in its planning effort. This is not an attempt to take over UN responsibilities,' he said. 'Since American taxpayer dollars are involved, and at times even American lives are at risk, we want to help get it right.'

US Defence Secretary William Cohen came to the United Nations on Jan 20 and met Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Undersecretary-General Bernard Myer, who heads the peacekeeping department. Cohen has invited Myer to Washington for the first time on Tuesday and Wednesday.

US Undersecretary of Defense Walt Slocum, who is in charge of policy, has also been at the United Nations twice in the past month, and the White House and Pentagon sent senior officials to New York on Thursday to discuss UN peacekeeping plans in Congo and East Timor.

Holbrooke said.

'We welcome the improved collaboration with the Pentagon with whom we've had good relations in the past,' said UN Communications Director Shashi Tharoor.

In the early 1990s, as UN peacekeeping operations were built up following the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon and the United Nations worked hard to establish a close relationship, said David Malone, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations who now heads the New York-based International Peace Academy.

But the killing of 18 American soldiers in Somalia during a US-led peacekeeping operation in 1993 was partly responsible for the United States backing away from the UN. Relations worsened over the US failure to pay its UN debt.

US Defence Department spokesman PJ Crowley also welcomed the new collaboration.

'We certainly agree with UN efforts to stabilise important regions of the world through its peacekeeping efforts and we are in renewed discussions with the UN on ways to make these efforts most effective,' he said.

The United Nations is currently involved in 17 peacekeeping operations around the world, the newest in East Timor and Sierra Leone.

American military observers and civilian police are participating in a number of UN

peacekeeping operations, including Bosnia, East Timor, Georgia, Kosovo and Western Sahara.

The Security Council has scheduled a vote Monday to nearly double the UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone from 6,000 to 11,100. The council is also expected to consider, possibly later next week, a US-drafted resolution to expand the current UN mission in Congo from 79 military liaison officers to 5,537 military personnel, including at least 500 military observers.

Azimpur murder Police yet to arrest anyone involved

By Staff Correspondent

Police could not arrest anyone involved in Wednesday's robbery and murder at the residence of a government official at Azimpur in the city.

Faisal, 18, son of Anwar Hossain, was killed and Parul, 22, the housemaid, critically injured during the incident.

A close relative of Faisal however is the prime suspect in the robbery and murder at the house, police sources said quoting the statement of the maid, Parul.

Sangskritik Jote programme to observe Ekushey

By Staff Correspondent

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote has chalked out a ten-day programme to observe the Shahid Dibash (Language martyrs) day.

The Jote will organise a cultural programme near the National Stadium at Mirpur for the first time this year. The cultural programme will start on February 10 and continue till February 21.

Gaziul Huq, a language movement veteran, will inaugurate the programme at 4 pm on February 10.

On February 21, 1952, valiant sons of the soil made supreme sacrifices to establish Bangla as the state language of then Pakistan. Since then, the day is being observed as Shahid Dibash (Ekushey) with due respect to the memory of the martyrs.

The Jote has also taken an initiative to observe the Shahid Dibash in Calcutta in West Bengal of India. Its president Ramendra Mojumder said at a press conference at the TSC of Dhaka University yesterday.

Prominent Indian writer Ananda Shanker Roy will inaugurate the programme there on February 27. A Bangladeshi delegation including Jote leaders will also attend the programme.

The Jote also placed a nine-point demand at the press conference. The demands include use of Bangla in all government and semi-government offices in all types of work except foreign correspondence and establishment of a museum of documents and books on Language Movement near the Central Shaheed Minar.

General Secretary of the Jote, Golam Quddus and its Central Committee members Tariq Sujat, Dr. Muhammad Samad, Shamsul Huda Chowdhury Selim, Hasan Arif and Jahangir were present at the press conference.

They told newsmen that cultural programmes on Ekushey will also be organised in different parts of the city.

aware of how terrorism and corruption are deterring your efforts to build a disciplined economic system and a democratic society."

Mahmud said it is difficult to say whether it would be possible for the future caretaker government to hold free and fair elections without any political understanding.

"It is imperative to change immediately some laws on the basis of consensus. There are already some logical proposals for amending the constitution and election laws. But legal reforms are not enough. Nomination of party candidates in a parliamentary election is one of the important aspects of democratic conduct. If we take an account of the comparative per capita income in the country, it would appear that the income of the MPs are higher than those of other nations. This is certainly not conducive to poverty alleviation or democratic representation," wrote Mahmud.

Besides, ordinary people believe there is no room for honest men of principle to be effective public representatives when they'll be defeated by influential, corrupt candidates in elections, even if there is a free poll. Now it has become a collective responsibility for you to restore the people's confidence in the democratic process."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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