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Hillary declares 'new era' for America

AFP, Washington

Hillary Clinton took charge Thursday of US foreign policy proclaiming a "new era for America" based on robust diplomacy and a fresh unity of purpose.

"I believe with all my heart that this is a new era for America," a beaming Hillary told a welcoming party of hundreds at the State Department following her Senate confirmation Wednesday as the 67th secretary of state.

Hillary, the wife of former US president Bill Clinton, faces unfinished wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the troubled Middle East peace process, climate change, conflicts in Africa and efforts to revamp a tarnished US image.

"I think this is a time of such potential and possibility. I don't get up in the morning just thinking about the threats and the dangers, as real as they are. I also think what we can do," said Hillary.

State Department officials said she already began calling

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Obama rips down Bush security, foreign policies

Picks seasoned, high-powered envoys to ME, Afghanistan and Pakistan

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama on Thursday picked two seasoned and high-powered envoys to the Middle East and Afghanistan and Pakistan, making another swift break with Bush administration policy.

In an aggressive push for peace in the world's most intractable hot spots, Obama named Northern Ireland peacemaker George Mitchell for the Middle East and Balkans mediator Richard Holbrooke for both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Flanked by the two envoys and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Obama told diplomats at the State Department that he was summoning the pair to "convey our seriousness of purpose" in light of "the urgency and complexity of the challenges we face."

Hillary Clinton added that "anything short of relentless diplomatic efforts will fail to produce a lasting, sustainable peace in either

place."

Obama's choice of two such respected and high-profile envoys signaled a new engagement in global affairs by his administration -- and a break with the policy of former president George W. Bush who resisted such a step.

However, there was little sign Obama would drop the Bush administration's hard line toward the Hamas Islamist movement when he backed Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip as a defense against Hamas rocket fire.

The new president also called on Israel to open Gaza border crossings to aid and commerce to help ease the plight of Palestinians.

Obama said he was sending Mitchell to the region as soon as possible to help shore up a fragile ceasefire that took hold last weekend after a three-week Israeli offensive left more than 1,330 Palestinians and 13 Israelis dead.

"It will be the policy of my administration to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace

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RAJUK MISSES DEADLINE

Uttara third phase plots to be allotted in June

HELEMLU ALAM

The Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) will start distributing the plots under Uttara Model Town third phase from June this year, instead of this month, as 20 percent work of land filling is still incomplete.

Missing its previous deadline, the Rajuk tried to extend the project time by one more year and has already got approval in principle in this regard from the housing and public works ministry, said an official.

Project Director of Uttara third phase Nurul Islam said they would start handing over plots from June and try to hand over all plots within this year. "We have already done 80 percent work of land filling and we are trying our best to

complete rest of the work by June 31," he said.

The Rajuk website however still announces that handing over of plots in Uttara sectors 15-18 will start this month.

Meanwhile, another Rajuk official expressed doubts about the timeframe for completing the land filling work in two of the 59 sections because the process for the work is yet to begin.

The whole project area has been divided into several sections for different types of work: 59 sections for land filling and 32 sections for road construction, for example.

The road construction work in six sections will start shortly while the processes for the rest are at different stages now, said the official.

Thirteen bridges will be constructed on the

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AL, BNP hold parliamentary party meet tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) and BNP will have their parliamentary party meetings before inauguration of the ninth parliament tomorrow.

The newly elected legislature will convene at 3:00pm at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. President Iajuddin Ahmed will address the opening session.

At the first sitting, parliament shall elect a speaker and a deputy speaker. It might also elect a successor to Iajuddin.

The AL Parliamentary Party (ALPP) meeting will begin at 2:00pm at a JS conference room. It will be chaired by Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleida Zia will preside over the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPP) meeting.

Party leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury last night told The Daily Star that they will select a deputy leader and a chief whip of the opposition shortly before parliament goes into session.

Meanwhile, BNP yesterday demanded that the traditional seating arrangements in parliament not be changed.

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PHOTO: STAR

Supporters of the newly appointed khatib of Baitul Mukarram and people against him clash in front of the national mosque before Juma prayers yesterday. The clash left 25 people injured.

Britain in recession for first time since 1991

AFP, London

Britain is in recession for the first time since 1991, official data showed yesterday, triggering a plea from Prime Minister Gordon Brown for renewed international help to tackle the financial crisis.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that gross domestic product (GDP) had shrunk by 1.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008 compared with the previous three-month period, when it contracted by 0.6 percent.

The generally-used technical definition of a recession is two quarters running of negative economic growth.

The figure for the final quarter of 2008 showed the biggest fall in GDP since 1980.

Brown said on Friday he was using "every weapon at our disposal" to fight the economic crisis.

"But we need the international co-operation as well," he told BBC radio.

Friday's data sent the British pound sliding to a 23-year low versus the dollar and London's FTSE 100 index of top shares slid under 4,000

points. Analysts warned of a long journey ahead before the British economy recovered.

"Our current forecast is for UK GDP to contract by 2.9 percent in 2009, with declines in output occurring through all four quarters," said Howard Archer of IHS Global Insight.

"This would be the sharpest contraction since World War II. Furthermore, we see GDP only flat overall in 2010 as recovery develops very gradually."

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Prayer Timing		
January 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:35	6:10
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:46	5:50
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Massive aid needed for Gaza: UN

AFP, Jerusalem

The world will need to donate hundreds of millions of dollars for Gaza to repair greater than expected destruction by the Israeli offensive on the territory, the UN humanitarian chief said yesterday.

"It will involve a very significant appeal for resources of hundreds of millions of dollars to address short term needs perhaps for the next six or nine months," John Holmes told a press conference.

"The level of destruction, which I expected to be high... was even worse than what I expected," he said after touring Gaza.

"What is perhaps even more important than the physical destruction is the human cost," he said. The Palestinian health ministry listed more than 1,300 dead and 5,000 wounded during Israel's 22-day Operation Cast Lead.

The world body would in early February make an appeal for international funds to meet the most urgent needs, he said.

Meanwhile, the head of the UN relief agency for Palestinian

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BJSA demands removal of law secy

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJSA) yesterday demanded removal of Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal as the High Court (HC) had earlier declared his appointment illegal.

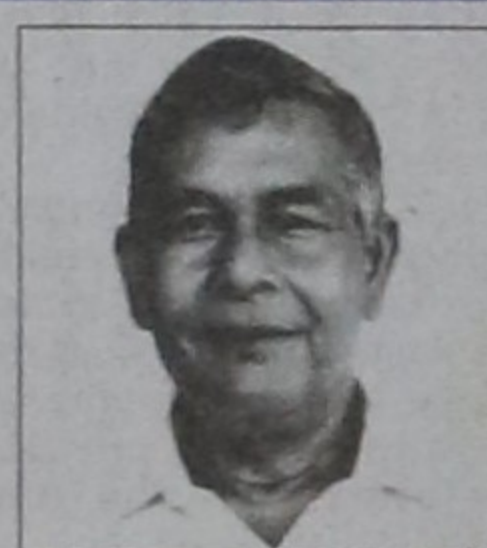
It also pressed for removal of all non-judicial officials from the law ministry and appointing judicial officials, including additional and joint secretaries, to the vacant posts.

The BJSA made the demands at an emergency extended meeting at the Jagannath-Sohel Smriti Auditorium at the Dhaka District Judge's Court with BJSA President and Dhaka District Judge Mohammad Abdul Gafur in the chair.

BJSA Secretary General Md Shahjahan placed the demands at the meeting attended by judicial officials from different districts.

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IN FOND MEMORY



Mrs. Anwara Islam, our mother died on 24 January 2005 - exactly the same day and date as our father Mr. Sirajul Islam who died twenty four years earlier.

Please join us in praying to the Almighty Allah to grant them eternal peace.

Akbar, Duree, Anika, Talita, Numair, Amani
and
Ms Lubna Choudhury

Founder-Principal, B.I.T. & Chairperson, The Red Brick School

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