

US envoy Richard Holbrooke dies

World pays tribute

AFP, Washington

Richard Holbrooke, the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan and one of Washington's most experienced diplomats, died in a US hospital Monday as the Obama administration reviews its strategy in Afghanistan.

Holbrooke, 69, was praised by President Barack Obama as "a true giant of American foreign policy who has made America stronger, safer, and more respected," by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as one of the country's "fiercest champions and most dedicated public servants," and by former president Bill Clinton as a man who "saved lives, secured peace, and restored hope for countless people around the world."

Holbrooke began his diplomatic career during the Vietnam War period, but was best known for forging the 1995 Dayton peace accords, which ended the three-year war in Bosnia when Bill Clinton was president.

On Friday, while working at the State Department, Holbrooke fell ill and was rushed to a Washington hospital, where he underwent a 21-hour operation for a torn aorta.

As he was sedated and going in for surgery, Holbrooke had some stark words: "You've got to stop this war in Afghanistan," he told his Pakistani surgeon, the Washington Post reported Tuesday.

citing unnamed family members.

In his role as special US envoy, he has had the daunting task of pushing Kabul and Islamabad to work together against resurgent al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Richard Holbrooke was a colossus who brokered peace in flashpoints such as Bosnia, world leaders said, lauding the dogged negotiator who died in harness while working to end the Afghan conflict.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton praised Holbrooke as a "remarkable man, a true diplomat and a champion of peace and reconciliation, not just in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but throughout the world."

British Prime Minister David Cameron said Holbrooke was an "indefatigable champion in the cause of peace, who worked tirelessly for a better world."

Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, who worked closely with him and others to broker the Dayton accords, said the US diplomat played an "absolutely decisive" role in forging the pact.

"Pakistan has lost a friend. He was an accomplished and experienced diplomat who quickly gained the confidence of his interlocutors," Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari said in an official statement.



Richard Holbrooke

UN to end Saddam-era sanctions on Iraq

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council will today end a swathe of Saddam Hussein-era sanctions against Iraq in a sign of the changes in the country, diplomats said.

US Vice President Joe Biden will chair a Security Council meeting that will lift the international penalties mainly dating from Saddam's 1990 invasion of neighbouring Kuwait that set off the first Gulf War.

While international worries persist over attacks on Iraq's Christians and other minorities, and no definitive post-war agreement has been reached with Kuwait, US ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, said it is time for international recognition of the "very real progress" made in Iraq.

Before the US-led invasion in 2003, Iraq was the target of the toughest sanctions regime in UN history with a near total trade and financial embargo.

One resolution to be passed on Wednesday would lift sanctions imposed in 1991 to stop Iraq building the feared nuclear, chemical and biological weapons that were never found after 2003.

Key Islamic party quits Pakistan govt

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's most prominent Islamic politician, a firebrand pro-Taliban cleric yesterday withdrew his party from the coalition government, protesting against the sacking of a cabinet minister.

Analysts said the departure of Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUFI), which has seven seats in the 342-member national assembly and 22 in the 100-seat Senate, will weaken the unpopular government but not deprive it of a majority.

"Our parliamentarian party has decided to quit the government. Our two (remaining cabinet) ministers have resigned immediately from their posts," Fazlur Rehman told reporters.

He branded "disappointing" the decision to sack Swati and Technology Minister Azam Sadiq, a JUFI member, for engaging in a war of words connected to a corruption scandal involving Pakistani pilgrims' accommodation in Mecca.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani also fired Religious Affairs Minister Hamid Saeed Kazmi, a member of his own main ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

The scandal reportedly implicated Kazmi's ministry in graft while booking accommodation for around 80,000 Pakistani pilgrims.

"It's not possible to remain in this government," said Rehman, defending the sacked minister for speaking out against corruption.

Hillary the best ever secretary of state: Obama

AP, Washington

There is a growing bipartisan consensus that Hillary Clinton is the best ever secretary of state, US President Barack Obama has said.

His decision to appoint Hillary as the secretary of state was one of his better decisions, the US president has said.

Obama who made a rare appearance at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the state department to attend the holiday reception party hosted by the Washington's vibrant diplomatic community by Hillary said, "I think there's a consensus building that this may be one of the best secretaries of state we've ever had in this country's history."

"One of my better decisions," he said amidst laughter. "It is a bipartisan view, by the way. That doesn't happen very often," Obama said about Hillary, who till early 2008 was one of his bitter political rivals.

Hillary is relentless, is tough and does not quit, Obama said adding, "She recently pulled off what one journalist called 'a Central Asian hat trick' --- she went to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan -- and then she threw in as a bonus, Bahrain,".

RADIA PHONE-TAP SCANDAL

Indian PM orders inquiry

BBC ONLINE

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has ordered an inquiry into phone-tapping amid a corporate lobbyist scandal.

Manmohan asked cabinet secretary KM Chandrasekhar to look into the matter and submit a report within a month.

The premier said he "was aware of the nervousness in the corporate sector" over authorised phone-tapping.

The Tata group chairman has taken legal action after his conversations with a lobbyist were leaked to media.

Manmohan said in a speech to business leaders in Delhi on Tuesday: "I am aware of the nervousness in some sections of the corporate sector arising out of the powers conferred upon the governmental authorities to tap telephones for protecting national security and preventing tax evasion and money laundering."

"While these powers are needed in a world that we live in, they have to be exercised with utmost care and under well-defined rules, procedures and mechanisms, so that they are not misused."

More than 100 tapes of conversations between corporate lobbyist Nira Radia and leading politicians, industrialists and journalists were recorded and transcribed by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Pakistan 'disappointed' at Sarkozy's remarks

AFP, Islamabad

Islamabad on Monday said it was disappointed by remarks French President Nicolas Sarkozy made in India criticising Pakistan for allowing extremist "safe havens" in its tribal border areas.

During a joint press conference in New Delhi last week, Sarkozy urged Pakistan to combat extremists on its territory.

The foreign ministry in Islamabad said it had "conveyed Pakistan's disappointment" to the French ambassador over the remarks.

Pakistan also voiced its disappointment to the German charge d'affaires in Islamabad over Chancellor Angela Merkel's comments about Pakistan following her meeting with Singh in Berlin.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Nepal's ex-crown prince Paras Shah with his wife

Cops detain Nepal's ex-crown prince after gunshot

AP, Katmandu

Police detained Nepal's former crown prince yesterday for firing a gun into the air after an argument with two guests at a restaurant, officials said.

Local police Chief Keshav Adhikari confirmed that Paras Shah had been detained and was being questioned about the incident.

Shah, the only son of deposed King Gyanendra, admitted firing his gun but defended his action, saying he could not bear to hear insults against his family and country.

He said in a statement that two guests at a restaurant at a resort in southern Nepal had made "baseless and provocative remarks against his role and the institution he represented." Shah said he left the restaurant, returned half an hour later and fired his gun into the air once, without harming anyone or causing damage.

Shah then fled to another resort in Pokhara, 125 miles (200 kilometers) west of Katmandu, where he was detained. Local television stations reported that police had taken complete control of the resort.

During his years as crown prince, Shah was often criticized for hard partying and frequent brawling. Several street protests were held against him, but he has never faced a criminal investigation or charges.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly abolished the centuries-old monarchy in 2008. Shah moved to Singapore with his wife and children but frequently visits Nepal.

Six lakh sign petition for WikiLeaks

AFP, London

Almost 600,000 people had signed an online petition in support of WikiLeaks, ahead of a second appearance in court in London by the whistle-blowing website's founder, Julian Assange.

The petition on campaigning website Avaaz calls on the US and other nations to "stop the crackdown on WikiLeaks and its partners immediately" and to respect "the laws of freedom of expression and freedom of the press".

WikiLeaks has been releasing thousands of confidential US diplomatic cables, causing huge embarrassment in Washington.

US President Barack Obama has denounced the leak as "deplorable" and various countries have tried to close down the site, sending it jumping from server to server in a bid to stay online.

Although the petition does not mention Assange, many supporters link the campaign against WikiLeaks to the allegations of sexual assault and rape made against the site's founder in Sweden.

Court grants bail to Assange

AFP, AP, London

A British judge granted conditional bail to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in a London court yesterday, one week after he was arrested over allegations of rape and molestation in Sweden.

However, he will not be released immediately as British lawyers acting for Swedish prosecutors are considering whether or not to appeal the ruling later Tuesday.

District judge Howard Riddle told City of Westminster Magistrates' Court in central London that the 39-year-old Australian will be tagged and subject to a curfew if he is released. He must wear an electronic tag, live at a registered address, report to police every evening and observe two four-hour curfews each day.

A total of 240,000 pounds (\$380,000) was put up as a guarantee by several supporters.

Assange's next court appearance was set for Jan 11.

Supporters outside City of Westminster Magistrates' Court erupted in cheers when they heard news of the judge's ruling.

Lindfield, acting on behalf of Swedish authorities, had asked the court to deny Assange bail because the allegations in Sweden were serious, Assange had only weak ties to Britain and he had enough money "to abscond."

He will have to reside at the country estate of the owner of the Frontline club, a media club where WikiLeaks have based part of their operation, and celebrity supporters have helped put up bail of 240,000 pounds (380,000 euros, 280,000 dollars).

Assange gave his lawyers and journalists in court a thumbs-up as he was taken out to await the deliberations of the lawyers.

News that bail was granted drew cheers from Assange's supporters outside the court building.

Swedish prosecutors want to question Assange on allegations that he sexually assaulted two women in Stockholm in August.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

We are a large, well-reputed healthcare company working in Bangladesh for the last thirty-six years, and wish to recruit the following professional. The Company seeks high caliber candidate who would join our Health Providers' Training Program and meaningfully contribute to the efforts to reach the organization's goal. The position will be located anywhere in Bangladesh.

PROGRAM EXECUTIVE
The incumbent will work as a team leader of our training team. He will be responsible for coordinating and implementing field level health providers' training program to promote appropriate information on using over the counter drugs and method of counseling among the health service providers with view to increase better informed end users of our products and services, thereby increasing sales.

Qualification and Experience:

- Medical Graduate (MBBS) or Masters in Biological/Social Science. MPH preferred
- Minimum 1-2 years experience in community oriented training program related to population and public health is preferred
- Excellent interpersonal and public relations skills with organizing capabilities
- Good communication skills in English and Bangla (both written and verbal)
- Knowledge in MS Word, Excel and Power Point is required
- The position requires extensive travel throughout Bangladesh. The incumbent has to stay more than 20 days per month in different districts and thana level so ability to stay under hard conditions for long time is needed

Prospective candidates may apply in strict confidence with detailed CV and two copies of recent passport size color photographs by **December 29, 2010 to the Box No. A-91**, The Daily Star, 64-65, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215

Please mark the position applied for on the top of the envelope.

* We are an equal opportunity employer.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

ICDDR,B invites applications from suitable female candidates for the position of **Medical Officer** with the Staff Clinic of Human Resources under the Executive Director's Division. The appointment will be made on a Fixed Term basis for 2 years which may be extended for further period depending on satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

Duty Station – Dhaka
Salary – Annual Tk.739,270/- inclusive of house rent and conveyance allowances with other admissible benefits.

Benefits/facilities -14.8% retirement fund contribution by the Centre; children allowance @Tk.1,420/- per child per month; medical facilities for dependent spouse and children; free group life insurance; and subsidized transport, canteen, day care facilities.

For detailed job profile and requirements, please visit our website: www.icddr.org. Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements should submit an **online application** by **December 31, 2010**.

Only short-listed candidates shall be invited for the interview.

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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

ICDDR,B invites applications from suitable candidates for the position of **Research Investigator (2 positions)** with the Programme on Infectious Diseases and Vaccine Sciences under the Health Systems and Infectious Diseases Division. The appointment will be made on a fixed term basis for 1 year, but we expect that successful investigators will be reappointed for a longer duration.

Duty Station – Dhaka, though the investigator will spend 35% of his/her time in the community overseeing the study implementation.

Salary – Annual Tk.739,270/- inclusive of house rent and conveyance allowances with other admissible benefits.

Benefits/facilities – 14.8% retirement fund contribution by the Centre, children allowance @Tk.1,420/= per child per month, medical facilities for dependent spouse and children, free group life insurance, and subsidized transport, canteen, daycare facilities.

For detailed job profile and requirements, please visit our website: www.icddr.org. Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements should submit an **online application** by **December 26, 2010**.

Only short-listed candidates shall be invited for the interview.

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Vacancy Announcement

Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces vacancy for the following positions for "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility" under "Service Contract" modality. The duration of the contract is one year initially and subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance.

1. Program Officer - Governance-- 1 position
2. Senior Technical Advisor-Education-1 position
3. Program Officer-Multilingual Education (MLE)- 1 position
4. M & E Expert, Education-1 position

For details of the Terms of Reference and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Hard copies of the TOR's can be collected from UNDP-CHTDF Offices of Dhaka, Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Applications should be submitted no later than 30 December, 2010.

"Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Submitted documents will not be returned to the applicants"

"Qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply"

Chernobyl area to be open for tourists

AP, Kiev

Want a better understanding of the world's worst nuclear disaster? Come tour the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Beginning next year, Ukraine plans to open up the sealed zone around the Chernobyl reactor to visitors who wish to learn more about the tragedy that occurred nearly a quarter of a century ago, the Emergency Situations Ministry said Monday.

Chernobyl's reactor No 4 exploded on April 26, 1986, spewing radiation over a large swath of northern Europe. Hundreds of thousands of people were resettled from areas contaminated with radiation fallout in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Related health problems still persist.