

New US envoy takes charge Monday, Holbrooke in India Tuesday

A seasoned South Asia hand and a polyglot, who speaks fluent Bengali, Hindi, Nepali and Sinhalese, A. Peter Burleigh is set to take over as the US' Charge D' Affaires (head of mission) in [New Delhi](#) Monday.

Burleigh, a veteran diplomat who has served as the US ambassador to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, has been given a temporary appointment as the Charge d' Affaires of the US embassy in India.

It is an interim arrangement till the Barack Obama administration appoints a full-time ambassador that may take some time as ambassadorial appointments require the Senate approval. Burleigh's predecessor David Mulford left last month to join Credit Suisse.

Burleigh, a counter-terror expert who had earlier served as ambassador and deputy representative of the US to the United Nations from August 1997 to December 1999, is no stranger to India and was posted here between 1973-1975.

Burleigh, who arrived Sunday, takes over as the head of the US mission here a day before US Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke comes to New Delhi Tuesday to discuss issues related to Afghanistan-Pakistan (called AfPak in strategic circles) region.

The new AfPak strategy unveiled by President Obama March 27 envisages a regional approach that includes a prominent role for India in stabilizing the region.

Holbrooke last came here in mid-February on a 'listening tour' soon after the new administration named him special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan. The special envoy will meet Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and discuss issues relating to the region.

India has welcomed the new AfPak strategy, but is uneasy about certain aspects like the US nudging India to resume composite dialogue with Pakistan at a time when Islamabad has done little to bring the perpetrators of the [Mumbai](#) attacks to justice.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made it clear in London April 2 after his talks with Obama that there will be no resumption of talks until Pakistan shows 'absolute sincerity' in bringing the perpetrators of the Mumbai terrorists to justice and dismantles the infrastructure of terrorism. The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan figured prominently in discussions between the two leaders.

Menon is likely to voice these concerns during the meeting with Holbrooke while reiterating New Delhi's broad support for the new US strategy aimed at defeating the Taliban and assorted militant outfits in the AfPak region that pose a direct threat to India's security interests.

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