

Obituary

**Maj. Gen. (R) M. Ilyas Burney
(1922-2008)**



Major Gen. M. I. Burney passed away on 29 September 2008. He was born in Simla, British India, on 1st January 1922. He received MBBS degree from King Edward College, Lahore in 1948, MC Pathology from Royal College of Pathologists, London, in 1965, FCPS from Pakistan in 1972, and FRC Pathology from London in 1977.

Maj. Gen. Burney has been all too well known and remembered as the scientist architect of the National Institute of Health (NIH) at Islamabad. He served the Institute for over a decade, first as its Director (1973-1980) and later as Executive Director (1980-1987). It was his vision that brought the Institute to its present exemplary status. After his retirement in 1992, he was appointed Scientist Emeritus and he continued actively serving the Institute in this capacity until his sad demise. He specialized in Microbiology (Virology & Immunology) with outstanding achievements of isolating Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever Virus (CCHF). Some of his other major contributions to Microbiology and Medicine are: (1) establishment of Polio Processing Laboratory, (2) Measles Vaccine Production Laboratory, (3) Human Diploid Cell (HDC) Rabies Tissue Culture Vaccine Plant, (4) creation of a Regional Center for Hepatitis, Influenza and AIDS, and (5) eradication of Guinea Worm from Pakistan. He also established WHO Collaborating Center for Research and Training in Viral Diagnostics. He was USAID Consultant from 1988 to 1992, and Advisor, Ministry of Health, Government of Pakistan, 1987 to 1988.

Burney Saheb was Fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) and Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS). He served as

Treasurer of PAS during the period 1998-2000. He was recipient of Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) from the Government of Pakistan in 1982, Shousha Award from WHO in 1984, Global 500 Award for Environment (UNEP) in 1988, and Sitara-i-Imtiaz from Government of Pakistan in 2001.

Maj. Gen. Burney was a very humble and mild mannered person. He passionately loved his profession. As Chairman of the Department of Biology at Quaid-i-Azam University, I had the opportunity of frequent contacts with him in connection with research advancement of his subordinates at NIH. He was ever keen to ensure that his colleagues and subordinates at NIH earn M. Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in their areas of special interest. Several of them received these degrees from the Biology Department during his tenure at NIH. For this, he earned their immense respect, and for whom he had due affection.

Burney Saheb remained deeply interested in ongoing scientific activities at the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. He rarely missed attending a lecture, seminar or scientific conference in spite of his failing health.

Maj. Gen. Burney has been blessed with two able and eminent sons, Eng. Irfan Burney, Chairman, NESCOM, Islamabad, and Lt. Gen. Rehan Burney, Surgeon General, Pak Army, Rawalpindi. The Fellows of the Academy express their deep grief on this irreparable loss to the entire family, friends and colleagues. His absence at the Academy will be felt much by all. May his soul rest in eternal peace in Jannat-ul Firdaus (ameen).

Prof. Dr. M. A. Hafeez
Fellow, Pakistan Academy of Sciences