

OBITUARY

Captain (Retd) I.A. ABBASI, Pakistan Navy (1944-91)

Captain (Retd) I.A. ABBASI PN breathed his last on 15 December 1991 in a London hospital, after his second heart by-pass operation. He was in his 48th year and has left behind him his wife, a son and three daughters together with a large number of friends and admirers.

Born on 1st February 1944 at Murree, a picturesque hill station near Islamabad, Pakistan, Captain ABBASI received his early schooling and college education in his home town. In 1966, he graduated (as a Bachelor of Science) from the Pakistan Naval Academy as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Executive Branch of the Pakistan Navy. He earned his Bridge Watch-Keeping certificate within the first year of his naval career and served onboard a frigate and a minesweeper to develop his sea legs.

As a young Lieutenant, in 1970, he chose Hydrographic Surveying as his future specialization and began his surveying career on board the Surveying Ship PNS ZULFIQUAR. His professional approach and outstanding performance in the field of hydrography soon qualified him to undergo courses abroad and, between August 1971 and January 1973 he completed the 52-week programme in Hydrographic Engineering/Marine Environment and the 16 week programme in Applied Oceanography at the U.S. Naval Oceanographic Office. He also completed 12 weeks training in UK on electronic positioning fixing systems and 20 weeks training in Japan on a wide range of hydrographic and oceanographic systems.

On return from abroad, Captain ABBASI again joined PNS ZULFIQUAR where he gained further practical experience in all types of hydrographic surveys and oceanographic observations. He played an important part in exploratory and preliminary surveys of the creeks in the Indus Delta. He later assumed the responsibilities of Senior Surveyor and Executive Officer of PNS ZULFIQUAR and became an expert in electronic position fixing systems, being the pioneer in the use of Hi Fix-6 equipment in Pakistan.

His untiring dedication and devotion to the service was rewarded in 1979 when he was appointed as a Charge Surveyor to command PNS ZULFIQUAR, in which he conducted important surveys along Pakistan's coast. He was promoted to Commander in January 1980 and, in August 1982, he proceeded to Japan as Chief Supervisor to acquire, for the Ministry of Communications, a new research vessel SV BEHR PAIMA which totally revolutionized the Pakistan Hydrographic Service, taking it from conventional means to advanced sophisticated computerized techniques

His knowledge, together with his professional experience and total commitment to the Hydrographic Service, elevated him to the ultimate responsibility of the Head of the Hydrographic Service in 1983. As Hydrographer of the Pakistan Navy, he continued to modernize the Hydrographic Service and introduced a computer assisted cartographic system, to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of nautical charts. He also was responsible for establishing a School of Hydrography in Pakistan and took a keen interest in providing extensive training for his surveying officers and recorders.

Captain ABBASI represented Pakistan and the Pakistan Navy at various national and international forums. He actively participated in all sessions of the Preparatory Commission on the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea between 1983 and 1986. As a result of his active participation, he was elected as the Chairman of the Contact Group of 77 on Special Commission-2 matters, by the Group of 77, in March 1986, at Jamaica. A regular speaker at national Universities and Defence Institutions as an expert in the field of Hydrography, he was a great authority in his field and an asset to his service and country. He retired from the Pakistan Navy in January 1988 when he was selected to serve in the International Hydrographic Bureau, Monaco, as Professional Assistant (Hydrography).

During his three years in the I.H. Bureau, he quickly adapted to the unfamiliar environment and won the great respect and friendship of all of the international and local staff. His previous experience in providing advise to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Abu Dhabi, on the establishment of their hydrographic services and Chart Depots, proved invaluable to his work as the Secretary of the FIG/IHO Technical Assistance Coordinating Committee, whilst his experience in Law of the Sea Matters were equally useful to his work as Secretary of the Technical Aspects of the Law of the Sea (TALOS) working group. He travelled to a number of developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific to advise on the development of hydrographic services and he prepared and delivered several technical papers on behalf of the IHO. Until his untimely death, he was in charge of the preparations for the XIVth I.H. Conference and its accompanying Symposium and Exhibition.
