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Obama wants doctor to head World Bank

NEW YORK: Singing rap, citing Buddhist teachings, and once dreaming of being a sports star, the likely next head of the World Bank may not be widely known — but he's no faceless bureaucrat.

Korean-born Jim Yong Kim is the president of Ivy League Dartmouth College, a medical doctor and, above all, a renowned campaigner against AIDS and tuberculosis in some of the world's poorest regions.

The 52-year-old's resume glitters with prestigious posts at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, among others.

An anthropologist, Jim is also one of the foremost actors in the kind of global health problems that are often seen as nearly hopeless.

In the mid-1990s he worked in Peru to develop the first large-scale treatment of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in a poor country, a programme now run in some 40 other nations.

Between 2003 and 2007 he also led a World Health Organisation initiative to bring antiretroviral drugs to three million new HIV/AIDS patients in developing countries, while a non-profit he co-founded, called Partners in Health, works with impoverished communities everywhere from Haiti to Russia.

That work has brought Jim fame in academia and global health institutions, but the bespectacled professor tapped by President Barack Obama to head the World Bank is virtually unknown to wider circles.

A closer examination reveals a passionate character prone to a surprising mix of the straight-laced and quirky.

From the day his parents brought him from South Korea to Muscatine, Iowa, at the age of 5, Jim was the archetypal, high-achieving American immigrant.

At Muscatine High School he was both class president and quarterback on the football team.

"My childhood dream job was that I would play quarterback either for the Minnesota Vikings or the Chicago Bears," he said on the Charlie Rose television show.

Jim's dentist father taught at Iowa University and his mother had a Ph.D. in philosophy.

Jim graduated first from prestigious Brown University, then Harvard Medical School, and finally earning a Harvard Ph.D. in anthropology.

Married to Younsook Lim, a paediatrician who has worked with HIV children in Africa, Jim talked movingly about his work in combating infectious diseases.

"The lowest points were back in the mid-1990s when we discovered all of these patients who were suffering from drug-resistant tuberculosis... sitting there in a slum in Lima, Peru, watching them die," he recalled during the interview.

Dealing with such misery, he said, was easier thanks to lessons learned from a Buddhist monk.

"One can be mindful and at peace and experience great happiness while at the same time struggling against some of the most difficult problems one can imagine." **AFP**

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*United States President **Barack Obama** (second from right) announcing his nomination of Dartmouth College President **Jim Yong Kim** as **World Bank president** at the White House on Friday. With them are (from left) US Secretary of State **Hillary Rodham Clinton** and US Secretary of the Treasury **Timothy F. Geithner**. AFP pic*