

CHINA-JAPAN TERRITORIAL ROW

Beijing calls for Dhaka's support on islands

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid tension over maritime territorial disputes and sovereignty issues among East Asian countries, Beijing has sought Dhaka's support in favour of its claim on Diaoyu Islands located to the northeast of China's Taiwan Islands.

Both Beijing and Tokyo have been claiming the ownership of the Diaoyu Islands and its affiliated islands having a landmass of about 5.69 square kilometres.

Of them, Diaoyu Islands alone covers a landmass of about 3.91 sq kms. Japanese call it Senkaku Islands.

Beijing's call was made at a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday.

Yang Zhaohui, political counsellor in the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, said the Japanese government, disregarding the repeated and stern representations made by the Chinese side, openly took an illegal action of nationalising Diaoyu Islands on September 10, 2012.

"This is an outright denial of the outcomes of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and poses a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter," he told the newsmen at the embassy.



Diaoyu Islands

Yang said Diaoyu Islands and its affiliated islands are legally and historically an inseparable part of the Chinese territories in the early years of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD).

But Japan occupied the territories following the China-Japan War in 1895, he added.

Yang alleged that the US was encouraging Japan to openly take illegal actions of 'nationalising' Diaoyu Islands.

If there is a war between China and Japan

over the islands, USA would support Japan, he said.

However, Shiro Sadoshima, Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, in a press statement yesterday claimed that the Senkaku islands are an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international laws.

The Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of the government of Japan, he added.

Diplomatic sources said the recent spate of disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Sea of Japan is sending reverberations throughout the region, apparently threatening to reignite instabilities.

The Chinese embassy official said Japan in recent years had repeatedly taken unilateral measures concerning Diaoyu Islands.

"The moves taken by Japan are totally illegal and invalid, which can in no way change the historical fact that Japan 'stole' the Diaoyu Islands from China and the fact that China has territorial sovereignty over them," he said.

China strongly urges Japan to immediately stop all activities that violate China's territorial sovereignty, take concrete actions to correct its mistakes, and return to the track of resolving the dispute through negotiation, Yang told the press briefing.

In reply to a question, Yang said the Chinese ambassador met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently and sent a letter to the Bangladesh foreign ministry seeking Dhaka's support to China.

Zhang Lei, chief of political section of the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, and another official We Wei were present.

US PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

Obama, Romney prepare for debates

AFP, Belmont, Massachusetts

US President Barack Obama and rival Mitt Romney prepared for Wednesday's debate this weekend, leaving their running mates to spar over policy and seek votes in key swing states.

With the president off the campaign trail just 38 days before Americans vote on November 6, Romney spent a quiet day in Massachusetts, visiting the home of son Tagg in a Boston suburb and, according to his campaign, steering clear of debate preparation.

But with both men seeking an edge in their crucial first face-off of the campaign, they will undoubtedly be spending the bulk of their time between now and Wednesday's debate in preparation for the showdown in Denver, Colorado, one of about a dozen swing states where voters will determine the election.

Obama travels to Nevada for an event on Sunday, and spends the next two days in the town of Henderson gearing up for Wednesday, according to the White House.

Both sides began their debate spin weeks ago, seeking to set high expectations for their opponent, which they could then declare he failed to meet, while setting the bar low for their own candidate.

Democrats say Romney is a challenging debater who honed his skills with about 20 debates in the Republican primaries. Republicans counter that Obama is seasoned with several presidential debates against John McCain in 2008.

NEWS IN brief

Wave of Iraq attacks kills 32

AFP, Baghdad

Militants struck nine cities and towns in Iraq with bombings and shootings yesterday, killing at least 32 people and wounding 104, in the latest wave of deadly attacks to hit the country.

With the latest violence, at least 252 people have been killed and 801 wounded in attacks in Iraq this month, according to an AFP tally.

Insurgents are regarded as weaker than in past years but are still able to carry out spectacular mass-casualty attacks, and have also shown they can strike heavily-protected sites such as prisons, police sta-

Nasheed faces trial in Maldives

AFP, Colombo

The first democratically elected president in the Maldives goes on trial today on abuse of power charges, seven months after being toppled in what he calls a "coup d'etat" in the tourist paradise.

Mohamed Nasheed's honeymoon with multi-party democracy ended in February when he was forced out in a police mutiny after he detained the chief criminal court judge on corruption allegations.

Once an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, Nasheed, 45, now faces up to three years in jail or banishment to a remote islet in the archipelago where tourists pay up to \$12,500 a day for

Nairobi church blast kills child

AFP, Nairobi

A suspected grenade attack killed one child and wounded nine others in a Nairobi church yesterday, a day after Islamist fighters abandoned their last bastion in neighbouring Somalia in the face of an assault by Kenyan and other troops.

The blast occurred during a service for young children at the Anglican St. Polycarp church, which lies in the Pangani district on the outskirts of the

Obama stops Chinese firm

IANS, Beijing

Citing national security risks, US President Barack Obama has blocked a Chinese company from owning four wind farm projects near a navy base where the US military tests unmanned drones and electronic-warfare planes.

Obama ordered Ralls Corp, a company owned by Chinese nationals, to divest its interest in the wind farms it purchased earlier this year near the Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility in Boardman,

Iraq to stop Iran flights over Syria arms

Fierce clashes in Aleppo

AFP, Dubai

Iraq is determined to stop and search flights from Iran over its territory, which are suspected of carrying weapons to Syria, Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said in comments, reported yesterday.

"We have assured US officials that the Iraqi government is determined to land (Iranian) flights and carry out random searches," Zebari said, quoted by Arabic daily Al-Hayat.

The Iraqi minister added that his government had told Tehran "to stop the flights and stop arming or financing the (Syrian regime) or any other party to the conflict."

Last week, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushed Baghdad to deliver on pledges to stop such flights during a meeting with Iraqi Vice President Kudaayr al-Khuzai.

Meanwhile, forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad shelled rebel-held areas across Syria yesterday as fierce clashes were reported in second city Aleppo where a fire tore through a medieval souk.

The fighting in Aleppo city was accompanied by intense overnight shelling that continued into the morning, destroying houses and killing at least three people including two civilians, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Aleppo, Syria's most populous city, has been the main battleground for the past two months of the country's 18-month conflict.

PAK TEMPLE ATTACK

Blasphemy case filed

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani police yesterday said that they had opened a rare blasphemy case against nine people who attacked and looted a Hindu temple in Karachi during recent anti-US protests.

Blasphemy is hugely sensitive in Pakistan, where 97 percent of the population is Muslim, and allegations of insulting Islam or the Prophet Mohammed prompt fury. Blasphemy can result in life imprisonment or the death penalty.

However it is unusual for Muslims to be charged under the legislation and nobody in Pakistan has ever been prosecuted for attacking a minority place of worship, although attacks on churches and temples are common.

BO XILAI SCANDAL
Son defends father

AFP, Beijing

The son of fallen Chinese politician Bo Xilai defended his father as "upright in his beliefs and devoted to duty", in his first comments on a scandal that has shaken the Communist Party.

Bo Guagua posted a statement on his Tumblr account on Saturday, a day after state media announced his father would "face justice" for a litany of alleged crimes including abuse of power, taking bribes and improper sexual relations.

Bo, who graduated from Harvard University's Kennedy School this year, confirmed the contents of the statement in an email, the Wall Street Journal and other media reported.

Thein Sein would 'accept' Suu Kyi as president

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar leader Thein Sein said in an interview he would accept democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi as president if elected, but added he could not alone amend rules that bar her from power.

Former general Thein Sein has paid rare tributes to Myanmar's Nobel laureate during a landmark tour of the United States where he has burnished his reformist credentials by insisting his country will continue its strides towards democracy after decades of army rule.

The Myanmar leader, whose meeting with Suu Kyi in New York marked the latest sign of warm relations between the nation's leader and its most famous former political prisoner, told the BBC's Hardtalk that there were "no problems" between them.

"If the people accept her, I will have to accept her. As I said before, we are now working together," he said, according to translated excerpts of an interview with the British broadcaster aired on Saturday.

But he insisted he could not act alone to remove the barriers impeding the democracy champion's route to the presidency, as



the country heads towards crucial 2015 elections.

Myanmar's constitution currently prohibits those with close foreign relatives from holding high office and Suu Kyi, who married a British academic, has two sons living in the West.

"I alone cannot change the constitution. This depends on the wish of the people and also the wishes of the members of parliament," he said.

Thein Sein also underscored the continuing importance of the military. Soldiers have a quarter of the seats in Myanmar's parliament and effectively have a veto on constitutional amendment, which requires a more than 75 percent majority.

Hazare didn't want political alternative

PTI, New Delhi

Maintaining strong opposition to entering politics as it is "full of dirt", Anna Hazare yesterday claimed that he did not get answers from the Arvind Kejriwal-led group on questions raised by him on how to organise a political alternative.

Hazare, who arrived in New Delhi yesterday morning and met activists to chalk out the next course of action on an apolitical anti-corruption movement, said the path of "politics is not sacred and it is full of dirt" but the route of agitation is "sacred".

Contending that a big movement and not politics will give the country its future, the activist said he had told the pro-party group that the route of politics was "not the right direction".

"I did not give an alternative. When I was told that an alternative has to be given, I said it is a good idea but I asked them to answer my five-six questions (on how to provide an alternative). But I did not get those answers," he told reporters.

Hazare was referring to the questions he raised on how will members of a new party be selected, where the money will come from and how will candidates for elections be selected among others.

TELANGANA ISSUE
March begins amid clashes

IANS, Hyderabad, India

Tension gripped Hyderabad yesterday as pro-Telangana activists clashed with Andhra Pradesh Police while hundreds of people were reaching the venue of the rally Necklace Road on the banks of Hussain Sagar lake to participate in the march for a separate state.

Police burst teargas shells to disperse protestors who tried to remove barricades and advance towards NTR Marg.

Police twice arrested ruling Congress party MPs from Telangana who staged a protest in front of the chief minister's office to protest arrests of people coming to Hyderabad while a section of state cabinet ministers from the region threatened to quit.

CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN
US troops death toll reaches 2,000

AGENCIES

The US military suffered its 2,000th death in the Afghan war - with a suspected "insider" attack at a checkpoint in the east of the country, BBC reported yesterday.

A Nato soldier and a civilian contractor have been killed in a suspected insider attack in eastern Afghanistan, the latest in a series described by a top US general as "the signature attack" of the Afghan war, reported AFP.

The assault on Saturday night also resulted in Afghan army casualties, Nato's International Security Assistance Force yesterday said, without providing further details.

Attacks by rogue elements in the Afghan security forces sharply increased this year, prompting the coalition to suspend joint operations this month.

The incident took place at a checkpoint near an Afghan National Army base in the district of Sayedabad, according to Afghan officials.

A senior Nato commander says that 80 percent of Afghanistan is free of violence but warned an insurgency still rages in the south and east, fuelled by fighters coming from neighbouring Pakistan.

"About 80 percent of Afghan territory and the Afghan population is not affected by security problems or violence," Lieutenant General Olivier de Bavinchove told AFP in an interview.

2 Venezuelan activists shot dead

REUTERS, Caracas

Gunmen shot and killed two local leaders of parties backing presidential challenger Henrique Capriles on Saturday in the worst violence of a volatile campaign before Venezuela's election next weekend.

Capriles' party, Primero Justicia (First Justice), said the gunmen fired from a van that witnesses identified as belonging to state oil company PDVSA or the local mayor's office during a rally in the agricultural state of Barinas.

The government of President Hugo Chavez, who is seeking re-election, confirmed the deaths and vowed the perpetrators would be brought to justice. Interior Minister Tarek El Aissami said the circumstances of the attack were still under investigation.

Biman to be shut

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Last year it incurred a loss of Tk208 crore. Recently, it came to the limelight after several thousands passengers had to endure unbearable sufferings due to a schedule chaos and poor services.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism ministry yesterday formed a one-member committee led by acting civil aviation secretary Khorshed Alam Chowdhury to probe the Biman schedule chaos.

The probe body was asked to submit its report within a month, Mainuddin Khan Badal, a member of the parliamentary watchdog, told reporters after a meeting of the committee at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

He also said they would arrange mass hearings after the probe report was filed.

Chairman of the Biman Board of Directors Air Marshal (ret'd) Jamal Uddin

Ahmed did not attend the meeting even though the parliamentary body had asked him through a letter to be there.

Biman's acting managing director AM Mosaddique Ahmed attended the meeting.

Pointing to a large leased aircraft leaving Biman's services without informing the carrier, which caused passengers to be stranded in Muscat, Mainuddin Khan Badal said they would look into the lease contract to see if there were any legal loopholes.

He said if problems were found, they would also look into the people behind signing of the faulty contract.

Our staff correspondent in Sylhet reports: The finance minister received the passengers of the Biman flight from London at the Sylhet airport.

The flight resumed after about a 10-month pause.

Muhith said direct flights between London and Sylhet would be ensured with the

setting up of aircraft refuelling facility at Sylhet airport within six months.

Work on the facility began in 2009 but it is still not done, he noted.

Speaking as special guest, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Faruk Khan said Tk 50 crore had been sanctioned for the refuelling facilities. He said the Sylhet-London flight would not be stopped in future.

He said soon there would be Sylhet-Jeddah flights for the Hajj pilgrims and that there would be two weekly flights to Jeddah.

Biman Chairman Jamal Uddin chaired the programme.

Many of the 280 passengers, who reached Sylhet yesterday on a Boeing 777, expressed satisfaction over the resumption of the flight but demanded better services from Biman and complained of harassment at customs and immigration lounges.

All-round India

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sublime, unbeaten 78 from 61 deliveries with the help of nine fours and two sixes to script an easy victory against a versatile Pakistan bowling attack after India's clinical bowling effort restricted Pakistan to a modest total.

The outcome not only kept India's hopes of reaching the semifinals alive but also ensured that interest in the group is kept alive till the last match on Tuesday as no team is yet confirmed a semifinal place, although Australia took a giant step towards the knockout stage after a comfortable victory over South Africa by eight wickets in the day's earlier match at the same venue.

There had been a lot of hype surrounding the clash but it became a dull affair in front of a capacity crowd in the big bowl mainly because of India's clinical display and Pakistan's brittle batting effort in the pressure game

after captain Mohammad Hafeez decided to bat first.

India, for whom this was a must-win game having suffered a heavy defeat in their first match against Australia, got off to a nervy start as Zaheer Khan -- who brought back memories of his first over in the 2003 World Cup final by bowling three wides in his first over here -- conceded 13 runs in the first over which also saw Virender Sehwag drop the Pakistan skipper at slip off the last ball. But they never looked back once left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan provided the first breakthrough, trapping the in-form Imran Nazir in front. Pakistan then lost wickets at regular intervals before managing only 128 runs in 19.4 overs -- a target that India overcame with three overs to spare.

India received an early jolt in their chase with the dismissal of Gautam Gambhir, but Virat Kohli joined Sehwag to dash any

hopes Pakistan may have had of bouncing back. Sehwag was dismissed for 29 but Kohli, who was dropped by Umar Akmal at backward point off Yasir Arafat on 42 and got another life later courtesy of Imran Nazir, was unbeaten on 78 to receive the man of the match award.

Earlier, Pakistan got off to a good start before Pathan's dismissal of Nazir. Pakistan coach and Shrewd tactician Dav Whatmore promoted the dashing Shahid Afridi up the batting order but his experiment didn't work as pacer Lakshminath Balaji bowled a bouncer which Afridi pulled straight down the throat of deep square leg fielder Suresh Raina, who pounced it gleefully.

It was however occasional left-arm spinner Yuvraj Singh who inflicted the main damage taking the wickets of Nasir Jamshed and Kamran Akmal in his first two overs, while another part-timer

Virat Kohli bowled Pakistan skipper Hafeez as Pakistan could manage only 60 runs for five wickets from the first 10 overs.

Some resistance came from Shoaib Malik and the young Umar Akmal but their effort was not good enough to set a challenging total for the vaunted Indian batting line-up which was bolstered by the return of Sehwag.

The Pakistan top order, which is generally considered to be their weak link, failed for the second successive game -- a real cause for concern for the Pakistan management. On the other hand, India made two changes to the team that lost to Australia, bringing in Sehwag and Balaji in place of Harbhajan Singh and Piyush Chawla, and the team put in a clinical display in all three departments to give skipper Dhoni some breathing space after all the debate regarding his captaincy.