

Marine resources to be utilised

Says PM

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh has been able to gain its due rights from India through the maritime boundary verdict and will take steps to properly utilise maritime resources for people's betterment.

She was speaking at the annual conference of the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the afternoon. She also joined an iftar party there, reports UNB.

Bangladesh has gained some 19,467 square kilometres of maritime areas at the Bay of Bengal out of the disputed approximately 25,602 sq km with neighbouring India, raising the prospects of exploring huge maritime resources.

ASHRAF ON MARITIME VERDICT Bangladesh has realised its logical demand through Tuesday's verdict of the international arbitral tribunal over its disputed maritime boundaries with India, said ruling Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday.

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Maritime ruling upsets Indian negotiators

Says Indian newspaper

STAR REPORT

The Calcutta-based English daily, The Telegraph in a report yesterday said India had lost to Bangladesh a swathe of sea larger than the area of Bengal in a landmark ruling by a UN tribunal.

The report headlined "Gone: sea larger than Bengal, UN Tribunal awards Dhaka marine chunk", said the ruling came after decades of a tug-of-war rooted in the Partition of 1947.

The award prompted a dissenting signature from New Delhi's representative at the tribunal, but the emissary was outwitted.

The verdict denies Indian fishermen access to part of the sea lost to Bangladesh. It also means India cannot tap natural gas and oil reserves predicted in that region by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, read the report.

The contentions used by the five-member bench that heard the case

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A mobile court backed up by Rab recovers a huge quantity of fake drugs at a home in Segunbagicha in the capital yesterday and arrested one person in this connection.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Fake medicine factory busted

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drive around 10:30am and seized seven types of fake antibiotics worth around Tk 20 lakh and a significant amount of ingredients and labels.

Among them, there were fake medicines with labels of well-known

drugs like Duracef, Navacef, Fixcef and Cefox of Navana Healthcare.

Navacef is a popular antibiotic for children, Anwar said.

The factory had been supplying medicines worth around Tk 1 lakh to the Mitford wholesale market every

week. Aminul used to buy low quality powder as ingredients and get labels printed from local printing press.

"For an antibiotic that would cost around Tk 200, he spent only Tk 20 to 30 [to manufacture per piece of the

drug]," Anwar quoted the factory owner as saying.

Didarul Alam, deputy director of the Rab-2, and Mohammad Azizullah, coordinator at the Directorate of Drugs Administration, were present during the drive.

DC's desire, Inu's reassurance

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The good news arising out of all this is that the parliamentary committee on the information ministry has taken the clear position that nothing should be done, either by way of reviving a dead black law or creating a new one, which aims at bureaucratic or government control of the media. It has sought a clarification of the matter from the minister for information, who has held out the assurance that the government has no plans to do anything of the kind.

One is reassured by the minister's response to the question raised by the parliamentary committee. The reassurance, made twice over a period of twenty four hours, is a sign that the government has taken serious note of the issue and

will do nothing that might raise questions about its attitude to the media. Given the arbitrary manner in which governance has sometimes been exercised in the country by putatively democratically elected governments, there have naturally been concerns about the media's exercise of freedom.

In a country where the media have been subjected to brutality through the various martial law decrees --- in 1958, in 1969, in 1975, in 1982 --- and through such acts as a shutdown of all newspapers barring four by a civilian government in June 1975, there are reasons to be worried about the DC's suggestion. Censorship and 'advice' and other modes of intimidation have in the past systematically threatened

the operation of a free press. There have been newspapers which have not been banned legally but which find their printing presses under lock and key for unexplained reasons.

These realities form the background to the worries of media practitioners. Worrying too is the DCs' demand that their powers be enhanced. History in our part of the world demonstrates without ambiguity that every time bureaucracy has seen an increase in its authority, democratic politics has gone on a nosedive. The government would be well-advised to be wary about advice proffered by bureaucrats given the regressive role they have played in our recent history. As for our DC in question, and others like him, they

need to stick to the rules. By the way, there is the good suspicion that the declarations idea may not have been this DC's at all. Where, then, did it originate? That said, no DC should be indulged to an extent where he can ask for authority over elected representatives, even at the lowest tier of politics.

The parliamentary committee on the ministry of information is to be thanked for its gesture. We trust minister Inu and the government he is part of will prevail against the forces arrayed against the media. And we must all be on guard against DCs and other bureaucrats who presume to be on a higher perch than the rules of service that define their place in society.

Info minister

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came a day after he assured members of the parliamentary committee on the information ministry that the government had no plan to revive the provision.

The deputy commissioner of Dhaka proposed to revive the provision which would empower the DCs to cancel declaration of newspapers for running reports that are anti-state or hurting religious sentiments.

The DCs will discuss the issue today with the information ministry officials, according to the schedule of the DC conference.

Sources at the secretariat said the proposal was made in line with the directives of political leadership.

Prime minister's political adviser HT Imam is in favour of the proposal. He recently told a private television channel that the DCs should be given back the jurisdiction of cancelling declaration of newspapers if those breach the conditions of the declaration of newspapers.

Asked whether the proposal would come up at the DC conference, the information minister said DCs can place many proposals regarding problems in their districts.

"They've placed a proposal for reviving the provision, but the information ministry is not discussing it... Even if they suggest for reviving the provision, there is no question of discussing it right now," he mentioned.

Enquired about whether the DCs should enjoy the power to cancel declaration of newspapers, Inu replied, "I don't want to discuss it. It's not an agenda."

The information ministry has recently formed a committee to review laws related to printing and publications and recommend necessary changes to update the laws.

The provision of the act was used for closing many newspapers until the caretaker government, headed by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, had scrapped the provision in 1991 following a movement by journalists.

Israel intensifies Gaza airstrikes

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Protective Edge reached 43, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas accused Israel of committing "genocide" in Gaza.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared bent on ploughing ahead, warning of even tougher action against Hamas.

There have been no Israeli deaths so far. However, Hamas began flaunting its firepower overnight, launching waves of long-range rockets across central Israel that triggered sirens in cities as far away as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Sirens even sounded in the northern port city of Haifa, witnesses said, as unconfirmed reports spoke of a rocket hitting near Caesarea and another striking even further north.

Tanks massed on the Gaza border, AFP correspondents reported, as Netanyahu came under mounting pressure from hardliners within his governing coalition to send ground troops into the territory from which it pulled all troops and settlers in 2005.

Bellicose rhetoric mounted from the Israeli premier.

"We have decided to further intensify the attacks on Hamas and the terror organisations in Gaza," his office quoted him as saying.

The flare-up comes with Arab riots inside Israel over the burning to death of a Palestinian teenager by Jewish extremists and the region in flames, with civil war raging in neighbouring Syria and conflict intensifying in Iraq.

The European Union and the United States both called for restraint in the confrontation which threatens to lead to a renewed ground conflict in Gaza and even more Palestinian civilian deaths.

It came as the Palestinians moved towards greater unity following a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and president Mahmud Abbas that ended seven years of rival administrations.

That deal came after nearly a year of US-brokered peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians collapsed, to the satisfaction of Netanyahu's hardline coalition partners.

The Palestinian teenager was murdered in apparent revenge for the kidnap on June 12 of three Israeli youths in the occupied West Bank, who were subsequently killed.

Their abductions sparked a huge Israeli assault on Hamas's infrastructure in the territory and retaliatory rocket fire from the Islamists' Gaza power base.

Six women and nine children were among 22 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza yesterday, medics said.

The deadliest single strike took place shortly after midnight when a missile slammed into a house in northern Gaza, killing an Islamic Jihad militant and five of his family members.

Further raids to the north and east of Gaza City killed another two women and four children, while a fourth strike on Maghazri refugee camp in central Gaza killed a woman and four of her children, emergency services spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said.

Another five Palestinians died in other raids across Gaza throughout the morning.

Oil-laden train

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Abdul Hai, chief engineer of Bangladesh Railway (East Zone).

People were seen collecting oil in their buckets from the canal, three to four kilometres away from the sea.

Md Javed, a local who was scooping up the split oil, said "I will sell the oil to a local shop to earn some bucks."

Asked whether the oil spill could reach sea water through the canal, Salahuddin Aziz, chairman of 10 Chhalimpur union, said, "There is a possibility of the crude getting mixed with sea water."

"During the high tide sea water floods the canal and then draws back."

Dr Alok Pal, professor of geography and environmental studies in Chittagong University, said, "Fish feed on plankton found on water surface, which would be destroyed by such a large volume of spill."

Jahir Alam, an assistant engineer of Dohazari Peaking Power Plant, said there were about 7,085 gallons of furnace oil in each wagon.

"Six wagons derailed and all oil from three wagons leaked into the nearby canal," said a senior railway official, preferring not to be named.

"It will take three to four days to assess the extent of damage caused by the derailment," Jahir said.

An intercity train with 500 passengers narrowly escaped a fatal accident on the route as the freight train was about to enter Faujdarhat Railway Station, violating the signal.

Udayan Express from Sylhet was approaching the station on green signal when the freight train was on the track, said Chandan Kanti Das, chief signal and telecommunication engineer of BR (East).

Sensing danger, the station master blinked red signal for the Udayan Express and its loco master managed to stop the Chittagong-bound passenger train, he added.

Rail communications between Chittagong and other parts of the country remained suspended for seven hours since 6:30 am following the derailment of the freight train at Sitakunda.

The railway authorities suspended the train's loco master Uttam Kumar Bhattacharya and assistant loco master Didar Hossain on charge of violating the signal, said Mozammel Haque, general manager of BR (East).

Two committees -- one led by BR (East) chief engineer and another by Chittagong Divisional Transportation Officer Md Zakir Hossain -- were formed to investigate the incident.

On July 30, 2013, train service on Chittagong-Dohazari route was disrupted after three oil tank wagons of a freight train derailed in Barua para area of Boalkhali upazila in Chittagong.

Dhaka prepares for legal battle

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Myanmar's claims over the continental shelf.

The date for the beginning of the legal battle is yet to be fixed as there are over 50 countries that submitted their claims before Bangladesh. Officials expect that the settlement over the continental shelf might be in 2019.

The continental shelf is an undersea extension of a continent which can stretch for many miles out to sea. Many nations have asserted mineral and land rights to their associated continental shelves since these are rich in natural resources.

The UN will fix the area of continen-

tal shelf of its member states, even though the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) on March 14, 2012, and the Permanent Court of Arbitration on Tuesday in their verdicts sustained Bangladesh's claim of a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone and a substantial share of the extended continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

Bangladesh submitted scientific and technical data (seismic and bathymetric) to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on February 25, 2011. It is the 55th nation to do so.

Talking to The Daily Star, an official

of the foreign ministry said Dhaka formally objected to Delhi's submission on May 11, 2009. "We dispute the Indian claims on areas of outer continental shelf since these are part of the natural prolongation of Bangladesh."

India is the 48th country to make its claim and Myanmar submitted its claim as the 16th nation.

Bangladesh also made a presentation before the commission on its claims two years ago.

The commission, after examining the data submitted by Bangladesh, will make recommendations on what to do about Bangladesh's claims on the continental shelf. It will take a few

more years to settle the issue.

Dhaka had consulted the Federal Institute of Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) of Germany, GRID - Arendal of Norway, Centre for Coastal and Ocean Mapping of the University of New Hampshire, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, USA.

The Commonwealth Secretariat provided legal and technical assistance in the final documentation of Bangladesh's submission. Dhaka also received advisory assistance from Herald Brekke, a member of the UN body CLCS.

11 AL men hurt

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Both the sides were armed with sharp weapons and firearms, he said, adding that the fighting groups fled the scene when police reached there.

Md Mannan, 20, Enamul Huq, 28,

Nurul Alam, 37, Nurul Kabir, 35, Kamal Uddin, 67, Manjhu Begum, 50, Mina Koli, 18, Robin, 18, Mishajur Rahman, 22, Bimol Dey, 40, and Rasheda Begum, 35, were being treated at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

All of them hail from Rashid Para and Muhuri Para of Lohagara union.

Hiru claimed that the clash was actually over entirely a different matter. He said Absar's supporters had demanded toll from a local transport company. He

claimed that the transport company refused to pay and had sought his help.

Hiru said angered over not getting the money, Absar's men carried out the attacks.

Denying the allegation, Absar blamed Hiru for occupying the piece of land.

Environment ministry

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(TIB) at Brac Centre Inn in the capital yesterday.

Mentioning that the case was being investigated, Manju said his ministry has taken initiatives to audit all climate projects to ensure transparency in expenses so that the donor agencies do not have any confusion regarding climate finance governance.

He said this in response to a working paper presented by Zakir Hossain, chief of Climate Finance Governance Project of TIB.

Zakir recommended that the government form a high powered climate financing commission comprising public servants, climate experts, representatives of affected communities, civil society members and media personnel.

The transparency watchdog also asked the government to bolster diplomatic efforts to get the grants and aid committed by donors.

Bangladesh has two climate funds -- Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) financed by itself and

Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) run on foreign aid, according to the TIB.

Starting from 2010, the Bangladesh government on its own has allocated Tk 2,700 crore till 2013-14 fiscal. Sixty-six percent of the fund was allocated to different short term projects.

The remaining 34 percent has been reserved to tackle aftermaths of disasters, should there be any.

As for the foreign funding, Bangladesh has so far received \$188.2 million of which \$146.2 million has been released.

The TIB also recommended that the government bring rationality and coordination in fund distribution.

The local government, rural development and cooperative ministry is implementing 30.7 percent of the total fund, the energy, power and mineral resources ministry 17.5 percent, the water resources ministry 16.9 percent while the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs got an allocation of only 0.1 percent of the fund.