

# US Navy sails ship close to islands claimed by China

AFP, Washington

The US Navy said that one of its destroyers had sailed close to the Chinese-controlled Paracel Islands in the South China Sea on Friday, asserting international freedom of navigation rights in the contested waters.

The USS Wayne E. Meyer guided-missile destroyer passed through the area of the Paracels east of Vietnam and South of China's Hainan Island without requesting permission from Beijing, or from Hanoi or Taipei, which also claim ownership of the archipelago.

The move could add to the tensions between the US and China, now bogged down in a grinding trade war, as Beijing pushes to expand its military reach globally.

USS Wayne E. Meyer challenged the restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam and also contested China's claim to straight baselines enclosing the Paracel Islands," said Commander Reann Mommsen, spokesperson for the US 7th Fleet based in Japan.

"With these baselines, China has attempted to claim more internal waters, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf than it is entitled under international law."

## Serial conman

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were delivered, he said. Using this method, Moshir had been swindling many before being arrested by a team of DB police from the capital's Sabujbagh area on Wednesday, Shahidur added.

Hearing the news of his arrest, many victims of his fraud, including the representatives of some top business firms, gathered at the DB headquarters on Minto road hoping to get their money back, he also said. "Moshir had offices in different areas in the capital, including in Uttara, Banani, Nikunja, Shantinagar and Paltan," Shahidur said, adding that he used to change his office location frequently.

The DB official said Moshir was placed on a two-day remand and police were looking for his cohorts.

## Ninth Wage Board

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Supreme Court Judge Md Nizamul Huq. The board submitted its report to the government on October 28 last year.

## One more

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while undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, taking the unofficial death toll to 148.

The official death toll, however, is 60.

Roushan Ara, 55, wife of Moslem Uddin from Kusthia's Bheramara upazila, died at the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital around 10:00am, RRMCH Deputy Director Saiful Ferdous said.

She was admitted to the hospital with symptoms of dengue and her organs were not functioning well, our Rajshahi correspondent reports quoting Saiful.

On September 8, Roushan was admitted to a local hospital in Kushtia. Two days later, doctors referred her to RMCH.

"She was shifted to the ICU after her condition deteriorated on Thursday," the official said.

## BTRC

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BTRC directed all mobile operators to limit 3G and 4G services in Rohingya camp areas, but the restriction disrupted telecom services in the areas surrounding the camps.

On the other hand, a representative of Bangladesh Mobile Phone Users' Association told The Daily Star that the 3G and 4G services are still available in some camps.

Meanwhile, locals said that after the restriction was imposed, local Wi-Fi network business got a sudden boost in the areas around the Rohingya camps.

Talking to The Daily Star, Additional Superintendent of Police in Ukhiya Nehad Adnan Tainan said that after doing the inspection, the BTRC team will make recommendations to the higher authority to make a final decision. The team will also meet the deputy commissioner (DC) and top police officers of Cox's Bazar in this regard.

"It is very tough to restrict mobile network in a specific area. That's why we may request the government to formulate a separate regulation for Rohingyas," said a BTRC team member, wishing anonymity. In addition to the camps, BTRC will also inspect the base stations or mobile towers along the border to see how far the network is available inside Myanmar.

Earlier, BTRC directed the telecom companies to make sure that Myanmar does not receive any signal from operators in Bangladesh.

# It's all system loss

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during transportation or handling of coal.

The report, however, said it was difficult to determine the exact system loss as the inventory of extracted coal has not been done since the production began.

Earlier, an internal probe committee of Petrobangla, the parent company of BCMCL, put the system loss at 1.42 percent.

Mortuza Ahmad Faruque, a former managing director of state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration (Bapex), said it was an administrative mistake on the part of BCMCL as it did not record the system loss in line with the international standard from the very beginning.

The findings from the technical expert panel came as the state-run mining company in Parbatipur of Dinajpur has been trying to find out how the coal disappeared from the highly protected yard.

It caused a huge hue and cry, leading to suspension of senior officials and filing of a case against nearly two dozen people, including seven former managing directors of the mining company.

A charge sheet prepared by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) put the missing coal's figure at 1.48 lakh tonnes. The ACC prepared the charge sheet against 23 people, saying they misappropriated the coal involving Tk 243 crore.

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The matter of the missing coal came to light on July 17, 2018 when a board member of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) visited the coal yard of BCMCL to find out whether the yard had enough coal to help run the three units of the power plant.

The plant, with a combined capacity of 525 megawatts of power, had to be shut down due to coal crisis. The state-run BPDB is the biggest coal consumer of BCMCL.

The coal yard was supposed to hold 1,47,000 tonnes in July 2018 but only 3,000-tonne coal was found.

When it surfaced in the media, the mining company filed a case with Parbatipur Police Station on July 24 alleging that 144,000 tonnes of coal had disappeared between September 2005 and July 2018. It accused 19 people.

According to the case statement, the accused officials, through mutual understanding, had caused the coal to disappear.

Abu Hena Ashiqur Rahman, ACC deputy director in Dinajpur, submitted the charge sheet before the Senior Special Judge's Court, on behalf of Shamsul Alam, deputy director at the ACC headquarters and also the investigation officer of the case, on July 24.

A hearing on whether the charge sheet would be accepted or not is due for September 15 (today), said Mohammad Omar Faruque, a public prosecutor, who is representing the ACC in the case.

The ACC has prepared a charge sheet against 23 people, which included BCMCL's former managing directors Md Mahbubur Rahman, Md Abdul Aziz Khan, Khurshidul Hasan, Kamruzzaman, Md Aminuzzaman, SM Nurul Aurangzeb and Habib Uddin Ahmed.

On July 19 last year, Petrobangla formed a three-member probe committee headed by Md Kamruzzaman, director for operation and mines at Petrobangla.

It found that 1.02 crore tonnes of coal was produced from August 10, 2005 to

July 21, 2018 at the coal mine, and 1 crore tonnes of coal was used, bringing the shortage to 144,525 tonnes.

The shortage accumulated from the beginning of the commercial operation, the report said. It blamed the system or technical loss for the shortage and recommended further investigation.

**TECHNICAL EXPERT COMMITTEE** On August 28, 2018, Petrobangla formed a seven-member committee, headed by Md Mahbub Sarwar, director for production sharing contract (PSC) at Petrobangla, and tasked it with finding out the system loss from production to marketing.

Other committee members include Chowdhury Quamruzzaman, professor of geology at Dhaka University; Md Shofiqul Islam, professor of petroleum and mining engineering at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology; Md Maqbul-E-Elahi, a former director of Petrobangla; AKM Shamsuddin, a former managing director of state-run Pashchimanchal Gas Company Ltd; Md Akbar Ali, director for geology at the Geological Survey of Bangladesh; and SM Habibur Rahman, general manager for engineering of Petrobangla.

The committee was restructured on September 27, 2018 after Mahbub Sarwar went on post-retirement leave. Md Kamruzzaman, director for operations and mines at Petrobangla, was made the convener of the reconstituted committee.

It submitted the report on November 20.

Chowdhury Quamruzzaman, also a mining expert, said the expert committee has found system loss from the production to marketing.

System loss is acknowledged across the world. It happens in other sectors in Bangladesh, such as gas, power and

water, he said.

"So, if we consider the system loss, then it is not a theft," he told The Daily Star on Thursday.

Former Bapex MD Mortuza Ahmad Faruque echoed the view of Prof Quamruzzaman.

"This has happened because of the system loss. It beggars belief that such a huge amount of coal would just disappear from the yard," he said.

It is well acknowledged that if coal is stockpiled under open sky day after day, small particles of coal would be blown away by wind or storm. Grain-size coal may be washed away during rains. Coal also faces internal combustion, he added.

Besides, when coal is carried through the conveyer belt from the yard to the power plants, some coal gets ground up when the belt shakes.

Petrobangla officials declined to make any comments.

The BCMCL management believes this was an accumulated loss of coal, which resulted from non-measuring at each reporting date after extraction as the weight of coal decreases with time due to reduction in moisture, internal burning and other related issues, the annual report of the company for fiscal 2017-18 said.

When enquired about the security of the yard, the BCMCL authorities told the expert committee that the yard is located over 17 acres of land and there is only one entry and exit gate.

The yard is enclosed by an eight-foot-high boundary wall and there is another three-foot high barbed-wire fence on top of it.

There are five watch towers from where 12 ansar personnel and three security guards watch the yard in three shifts. Closed-circuit TV cameras have been installed for surveillance. The stack yard is a key point installation (KPI).

## Two killed

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Chandra Saha, who was injured in the incident, received treatment at Mymensingh Police Lines Hospital, said police.

The OC said Rubel was accused in seven cases, including five for drug peddling, lodged with different police stations in Mymensingh and Gazipur.

Rubel's family said some people with vested interests might have implicated him in the cases.

Police sent the body to the MMCH morgue for an autopsy. A case was filed with Bhaluka Police Station in this regard.

### FAMILY'S VERSION

Ayesha Akter, wife of the deceased, alleged that a nephew of her husband called him on Thursday afternoon. He took Rubel to the house of one Mazharul Islam in Jamirdia village.

She said they came to know from some local people that a group of plainclothes men went to Mazharul's home, put Rubel aboard a microbus and left the area.

Ayesha, 28, said they tried to reach Rubel over phone, but nobody answered calls after Thursday afternoon. His phone was found switched off since Friday noon.

"I along with my family members looked for my husband at the Bhaluka Police Station and the DB offices in Mymensingh and Gazipur, but in vain."

Yesterday morning, the family heard from local people that Rubel was killed in a "gunfight" with police. Ayesha said they went to the MMCH morgue and identified the body. She demanded proper investigation into the "gunfight" incident.

Enquired by The Daily Star about picking up Rubel from his house, Mazharul kept mum. He hung up his phone citing poor network coverage.

OC Shah Kamal said they had no information about Rubel being picked up by some plainclothes men.

**ANOTHER KILLED IN 'GUNFIGHT'** In Chapainawabganj, alleged criminal Tutul, 35, was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Moharajpur area yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

Tipped off that some criminals were holding a secret meeting in Moharajpur to foil the upcoming upazila parishad election, police conducted a drive there around 1:00pm, said Idris Ali, inspector (operations) of Chapainawabganj Sadar Police Station.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, criminals opened fire at them, triggering a "gunfight".

Police rescued bullet-hit Tutul after the "gun battle" and took him to Sadar Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, the inspector said.

Law enforcers claimed to have recovered a pistol, a magazine, five sharp weapons and some empty bottles of Phensidyl from the spot.

Police said Tutul was accused in 17 cases, including for murder.

## Houthi drones

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security presence around Abqaiq.

"A successful attack on Abqaiq would be akin to a massive heart attack for the oil market and global economy," said Bob McNally, who runs Rapidan Energy Group and served in the U.S. National Security Council during the second Gulf War in 2003.

Abqaiq is 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Aramco's Dhahran headquarters. The oil processing plant handles crude from the world's largest conventional oilfield, the supergiant Ghawar, and for export to terminals Ras Tanura - the world's biggest offshore oil loading facility - and Juaymah. It also pumps westwards across the kingdom to Red Sea export terminals.

Two of the sources said Ghawar was flaring gas after the strikes disrupted gas processing facilities. Khurais, 190 km (118 miles) further southwest, contains the country's second largest oilfield.

Many Western employees of Aramco live in Abqaiq. The US Embassy in Riyadh said it was unaware of any injuries to Americans from the attacks.

"These attacks against critical infrastructure endanger civilians, are unacceptable, and sooner or later will result in innocent lives being lost," the embassy quoted Ambassador John Abizaid as saying in a Twitter post.

The three sources said Aramco had raised emergency levels and was holding a crisis meeting after the assault.

It was the latest in a series of Houthi missile and drone strikes on Saudi cities that had largely been intercepted, but have recently hit targets, including Shaybah oilfield last month and oil pumping stations in May. Both those attacks caused fires but did not disrupt production.

"This is a relatively new situation for the Saudis. For the longest time they have never had any real fears that their oil facilities would be struck from the air," Kamran Bokhari, founding director of the Washington-based Center for Global Policy, told Reuters.

He said Riyadh had in the past largely protected oil assets against vehicle-borne explosive attacks by militant groups.

Hours after the Houthi strike in Abqaiq, the Reuters witness said fire and smoke were still visible but had started dying down. Earlier video footage verified by Reuters showed bright flames and thick plumes of smoke rising towards the dark pre-dawn sky.

# A life of luxury, not simplicity

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Rabbani claimed he rented the 2,600 sqft flat in Hatirpool for just Tk 40,000, incredible value considering its location.

He told The Daily Star that his father and younger brother have been paying his rent since 2015.

Rabbani started using a Toyota Noah the day after becoming the general secretary body last year. Asked how he could afford such a vehicle; he said the microbus was not yet paid for and that there were pending installments. He did not say how he is paying the installments.

Shovon has the same car as well.

When they used to live in university dorms, they mostly used rickshaws to get around campus.

Rabbani, also the general secretary of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Dcsu), installed an air conditioner in his Dcsu building office last month. He claimed that a well-wishing alumnus gave it to him.

On September 5, Shovon along with some of his followers flew back to Dhaka from Sylhet.

They used the VIP lounge of the Osmani International Airport and several local Chhatra League leaders went on the tarmac, violating airport security measures, to see them off.

Shovon could not be reached despite repeated attempts.

### WEAK LEADERSHIP

Chhatra League top leaders' weakness in running the largest student organisation of the country has been in talks ever since the two were made president and general secretary.

Over a year into their two-year tenure, they could form only two out of 111 organisational committees (university, district, metropolitan units committees) they were supposed to form.

Despite being asked by AL President Sheikh Hasina and General Secretary Obaidul Quader, they failed to declare the fully-fledged central committee within a given time.

Ten months after being selected to the posts, they declared a committee on May 13 that included a few married people, non-students, extortionists, expelled Chhatra League men, drug dealers, and addicts, and former

leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir, according to insiders.

Such people are not allowed in Chhatra League, as per its charter.

The duo went to the Chhatra League office on Bangabandhu Avenue only seven times in over a year.

### 'MONEY FOR POSTS'

Islamic University Chhatra League committee is one of the two committees the duo managed to form.

There are allegations that posts in the committee formed on July 13 was sold.

In a taped phone conversation that made its rounds in social media, reportedly Islamic University Chhatra League General Secretary Rakibul Hasan is heard saying that he paid Tk 40 lakh to become the general secretary but it did not matter since he could now make twice as much in six months.

The Daily Star obtained the 7.27-minute audio clip.

Rakib denied it was his voice.

The person on the other end of the call could not be identified.

Several Chhatra League leaders of

# NRC publishes the status

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the same to the public to file appeals," he added.

Meanwhile, about 30 organisations representing various indigenous organisations, including the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), have demanded that the indigenous people excluded from the final NRC be included without forcing them to approach Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) to establish their citizenship.

Rights groups and tribal organisations in Assam have claimed that at least 2 lakh indigenous people have been excluded from the NRC allegedly for lack of proper documents. Among the NRC-excluded are Koch-Rajbongshi, Karbi, Reang and Bodo tribes. Many non-tribal Assamese people have also found themselves on the rejection list. Over 1 lakh Gurkhas are also believed to be left out of NRC.

"The Supreme Court-monitored

NRC was not error-free. The names of indigenous people have been excluded while many foreigners have been included. The NRC must be free of illegal migrants and the indigenous should not be made to go through FT as they cannot be foreigners by any definition of the term," AASU advisor Samujjal Bhattacharyya said.

Resentment against illegal immigrants has simmered for years in Assam, one of India's poorest states, with residents blaming outsiders for stealing their jobs and land.

Critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which also runs Assam, say the NRC process reflects its aim to serve only its co-religionists.

In January, India's lower house passed legislation that stands to grant citizenship to people who moved to India from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan as recently as six years ago -- but not if they are Muslim.

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah, Modi's right-hand-man, has called for the ejection of "termites" and said before the BJP's thumping re-election victory in May that it would "run a countrywide campaign to send back the infiltrators".

A team of United Nations experts, including the special rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief, said in July that the NRC could "exacerbate the xenophobic climate while fueling religious intolerance and discrimination in the country."

The process to update the register began following an Indian Supreme Court order in 2013, with the state's nearly 33 million people having to prove that they were Indian nationals prior to March 24, 1971.

The Indian Home Ministry said last week that those who will be excluded from the NRC would not automatically become foreigners and "every individual left out can appeal

SA-5 missiles, and fly back.

They had red-tailed and Harris's hawks, great horned owls, a vulture, and a cockatoo.

It was not easy. A cockatoo was "a clever flyer" but "maybe too slow to avoid gull attacks."

Two falcons died from illness; another promising candidate lost feathers and trainers had to wait for it to molt and grow them back.

The most promising flyer was Do Da, the raven. In just three months, Do Da went from a successful 3/4-mile trip to six miles from shore to boat, and then four miles back to shore on the same day.

He was the most promising candidate for the Russia mission, the "star of this project," one scientist wrote, who figured out the right altitudes in the right winds, and acquired "sufficient guile to outwit the native ravens and gulls," which hid for attacks on him.

But on a training mission he was attacked by "the usual pair" of ravens -- and was not seen again.

The scientists were deeply dismayed. "He had a large bag of tricks

and was loved by all," one wrote.

The other major effort was with pigeons, used for over two millennia as messengers and to take photographs during World War I.

The challenge was that pigeons work from home coops or roosts, places they are familiar with.

The CIA needed them for missions in the Soviet Union, where they would fly between unfamiliar roosts and photo targets.

The agency acquired hundreds of pigeons, testing them and cameras in areas around the United States to see if they could be trained on simulated paths.

Soon the target became known: the shipyards in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) where the Soviets built nuclear submarines.

After much training, the birds were brought to Washington for testing, and results were mixed.

Some snapped perfect photos, but others flew out, with expensive cameras attached, and weren't seen again. One was attacked by a hawk, and came back three weeks later with no camera.