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UN accepts Pakistan's demand for extending sea limit to 350 nautical miles

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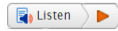
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March 21, 2015

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The United Nation's Commission on Limits of Continental Shelf (UN CLCS) has accepted Pakistan's demand of extending its continental shelf limits by extending the sea limit from 200 to 350 nautical miles, said officials of the Pakistan Navy on Friday.

This extension means the addition of more than 50,000 square kilometres in the existing 240,000-square-kilometre Exclusive Economic Zone of Pakistan.

A Pakistani delegation headed by Dr Maliha Lodhi, the permanent representative of Pakistan to UN, gave the final presentation on March 10, 2015, to the UN CLCS which after extensive deliberation announced to accept the claim.

It was said that active pursuance and prompt responses of the Pakistani delegation helped in culmination of the whole process successfully in a relatively short period of time. Following which Pakistan's claim for extension of its continental shelf limits was accepted, giving the country exclusive rights over the seabed and subsoil resources of an additional 50,000 square kilometres. They said this was a landmark achievement and a momentous event in the country's history which would bring vast economic benefits through exploitation of extensive natural resources.

Article 76 of the UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UN CLOS) allows coastal states to extend their Continental Shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. However, a coastal state is required to prove its case through technical data to the UN Commission on Limits of Continental Shelf, a body of 21 experts in geology, geophysics, hydrography and other related disciplines.

Pakistan also has the honour of representation in this august body. Commodore M Arshad SI (M), Hydrographer of Pakistan Navy is a member of the commission.

The project to extend Pakistan's continental shelf began in 2005 by the Pakistan Navy and National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in collaboration with the

ministry of science and technology as the sponsor ministry. After four years of dedicated work, collection and processing of voluminous technical data, a comprehensive submission was made to UN CLCS on April 30, 2009.

On Pakistan's turn, a seven member sub-commission of the UN CLCS undertook an in-depth analysis/review of Pakistan's submission and after over a year-long scrutiny and analysis, the commission has now accepted the recommendations for extension of Pakistan's continental shelf from 200 to 350 nautical miles.

During this process, a technical delegation from Pakistan, comprising Commodore Zafar Mansoor Tipu of Pakistan Navy, Dr Asif Inam the director-general of National Institute of Oceanography, Commander Salman Ahmed Khan of Pakistan Navy's Hydrographic department, Mohsin Tabrez and Khalid Mehmood of National Institute of Oceanography, undertook this important task and held multiple interactions with the sub-commission.

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