

Landmark achievement

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Pakistan gets additional sea area

KARACHI: United Nation's Commission on Limits of Continental Shelf (UN CLCS) completed its review and accepted Pakistan's claim for extension of its continental shelf limits thereby extending Pakistan's sea limits from 200 Nautical Miles to 350 Nautical Miles.

This adds over 50,000 sq km of continental shelf, to the existing 240,000 sq km of EEZ, under Pakistan's jurisdiction, a press release of Pakistan Navy said here on Friday.

Pakistan will have exclusive rights over the seabed and subsoil resources of the added area. This is a landmark achievement and a momentous event in the country's history which would bring vast economic benefits through exploitation of extensive natural resources present there. It is a proud moment for the entire nation as Pakistan has become the first country in the region to achieve this remarkable feat.

Article 76 of the UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allows coastal states to extend their Continental Shelf beyond 200 NM.

However, a coastal state is required to prove its case through technical data to the UN Commission on Limits of Continental Shelf (CLCS); a body of 21 experts in Geology, Geophysics, Hydrography and other related disciplines. Pakistan also has the honour of representation in this august body. Hydrographer of Pakistan Navy, Commodore M Arshad, is member of the Commission.

The project to extend Pakistan's Continental Shelf was started in 2005, jointly by Pakistan Navy and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) with Ministry of Science and Technology as the sponsor Ministry.

After 4 years of dedicated work and 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 UN CLCS undertook an in-depth analysis/ review of Pakistan's Submission and after over a year long thorough scrutiny and analysis. UN CLCS has now adopted recommendations for extension of Pakistan's continental shelf from 200 to 350 NM.

During this process, a Technical Delegation from Pakistan; comprising Judge Advocate General of Pakistan Navy, Commodore Zafar Mansoor Tipu, Project Director and Director-General National Institute of Oceanography, Dr. Asif Inam, Pakistan Navy Hydrographic Department's Commander Salman Ahmed Khan, National Institute of Oceanography's Mohsin Tabrez and Khalid Mehmood, undertook this important task and held multiple interactions with the Subcommission, the Pakistan Navy press release further said.

At the final stage, Pakistan's delegation, headed by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Dr. Maliha Lodhi, gave the final presentation on March 10, 2015. After extensive deliberations the UN CLCS has now announced the adoption of Pakistan's claim. Active pursuance and prompt responses of Pakistan's delegation helped in culminating the whole process successfully in a relatively short timeframe.

The accomplishment of this historic milestone, which augurs well for economic well being of the future generations, is the outcome of seamless coordination and cooperation between various ministries and departments as well as sustained government support throughout a decade long effort. It is by all means a great national achievement with rich dividends for the nation in future. All those associated with the project deserve commendation. The nation is rightly proud of this achievement. We must now utilise all our resources to exploit the vast economic potential of our maritime zones for the benefit of our nation, it said.—APP



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