

Staff Reporter

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday asked the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry to go for fresh bidding of offshore blocks to ensure the optimum extraction of oil and gas from the Bay of Bengal.

“Go for fresh biddings in the Bay of Bengal and make sure that no particular bidder gets all the blocks or maximum of those,” she said.

The Prime Minister gave the directive while presiding over a high-level meeting at her office (PMO) on formulating a strategy and action plan for extracting maritime resources and their smooth management.

She also instructed the authorities concerned to formulate a master plan to always conduct surveys and researches on maritime resources in the Bay following the victory in maritime boundary demarcation disputes against Myanmar and India.

After the meeting, PM’s press secretary AKM Shameem Chowdhury briefed reporters.

He said the Prime Minister laid emphasis on taking necessary action plans for protecting the vast sea areas acquired from Myanmar and India in the Bay and use the maritime resources for the welfare of people.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh will have to consolidate the maritime victories within the shortest possible time hoping that the maritime resources would bring about a revolution in the country’s socioeconomic development.

She stressed the importance of having the country’s own satellite for surveys and researches and hoped that ‘Bangabandhu Satellite’ will be launched by 2017.

The Prime Minister asked the ministries and divisions concerned to conduct separate surveys and researches in the shallow and deep sea areas and to procure necessary suitable equipment for that purpose.

Emphasizing the need for protecting the mineral resources, Hasina said her government would take steps for strengthening Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard to ensure the security of the sea and its resources.

Laying emphasis on protecting the ecology and biodiversity of the sea, she asked the ministries concerned to work out their individual plans for the extraction of all resources, including seaweeds.

The Prime Minister also asked for taking a massive plantation drive to recover char areas and make the new chars liveable.

Hasina stressed the need for making sea tourism more attractive and said joint initiatives by Bangladesh, the Maldives, India and Sri Lanka should be taken to develop sea tourism in the region.

Referring to the initiative of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for resolving maritime disputes with neighbors, Sheikh Hasina said the post-1975 government had showed their complete inertia in this regard.

After 21 years, she said, the Awami League government reinitiated the process after assuming office in 1996, she added.

Thirteen ministers, one PM’s adviser and state ministers spoke on the occasion over the issue. Secretaries concerned, the Navy chief, SPARSO chairman, the Surveyor General and chairman of Bangladesh Atomic Commission presented 10 concept papers on development and use of maritime resources at the meeting.

