

Convincing? Well, Not Quite!

PM Nawaz Sharif's address fails to soften hearts in Pakistan, reports Muhammad Najeeb from Islamabad



A soldier of the Indian Army takes a rest 13 July 1999 in Mukshoh Valley in Indian held Kashmir. The soldiers will have a good rest after a grueling one and a half months of battle on the hills till 16 July 1999 as the ceasefire between both sides is in effect till then to facilitate the withdrawal of the Islamic infiltrators from the region.

Like it or not, the Kashmir issue was relegated into the background as the world refused to accept the regime's explanation and almost unanimously demanded withdrawal from Kargil," he added. The Jamaat-e-Islami also announced that it would hold demonstrations in Lahore and Karachi against the agreement between Sharif and U.S. President Bill Clinton which it sees as a "sellout" of the national interest.

The Jamaat chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, who is in the United States, held a rally in

New York against the Sharif-Clinton agreement. The party's acting chief, Munawar Hassan, told IANS that Ahmad would be back by Friday when the Jamaat plans to hold a big demonstration in Lahore, Sharif's hometown.

Hassan said disregarding Sharif's disloyalty to the Kashmiri people, the entire Pakistani nation would continue to support their "jehad" (holy war) till the Kashmiris get

their right to self-determination. The women's wing of the Jamaat on July 12 held a protest demonstration in Karachi.

"We were waiting for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's address, but he has failed to give reasons for the withdrawal," Tehrik-e-Insaf leader Ahmad Zaman said after the address was broadcast by state-run television and radio on Monday night. Zaman said his party's

chief, former cricketer Imran Khan, would lead rallies in Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Peshawar next week.

Sharif, in his address, had said the Mujahideen had "responded positively" to a government appeal to withdraw from Kargil to avoid major conflict between India and Pakistan. But his assertion was contradicted by several of the guerrilla groups which said they were still entrenched in

Indian territory and would not withdraw.

"We will not stop our struggle against India and we will not vacate the peaks in Kargil. Any agreement between India and Pakistan may apply to the Pakistan Army, but not on the Mujahideen," Fazlur Rehman Khalil, head of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, was quoted as saying by the *Nation*. "The Mujahideen are free to take their own decisions and not bound by the agreement [between Sharif and Clinton]. Our battle will continue till the last Indian soldier is in Kashmir," Khalil added.

Syed Salahuddin Ahmed, chairman of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an alliance of 15 Kashmiri separatist organisations, had earlier said the Mujahideen could readjust their positions in Kargil and Drass but would not agree to a withdrawal. "Withdrawal from our present positions is out of the question, but we can readjust our positions due to climatic conditions and enemy tactics," he said.

Fahim Ahmed, a spokesman for the Al-Badar Mujahideen, also dismissed the chances of a withdrawal on the Pakistan government's request. In an interview with the Urdu daily *Kawnat*, he said hundreds of Indian artillery guns and jet fighters were bombing Mujahideen positions and it would tantamount to suicide if "we vacate our strategic positions".

However, one group, called the Tehrik-e-Jehad, said it would heed the government's appeal for "help". "We are disengaging Indian forces in the Kargil sector. We have achieved a lot out of it, we inflicted heavy physical and material losses to the Indian troops," said Salim Wani, the group's chief organiser.

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The Highlights of Pak PM's Speech

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Addressing the nation over national hook-up, he said, "It's already too late, there should be no more delay. Our decision to give diplomacy another chance has not been taken out of any pressure, haste or worry. Let's talk. Let's give a life of peace and security to our people by protecting them from the dangers of war".

Nawaz Sharif said the basic objective of the Mujahideen to capture Kargil heights was to invite the attention of the international community towards the Kashmir issue, which has been showing indifference to it for long. Mujahideen, he stated, have been successful in the realization of their objective. Their action has vindicated our stand that Kashmir is a nuclear flash-point.

He dismissed the impression by certain quarters that Kargil's occupation could have led to an advance towards Srinagar. There is no path leading to Srinagar from there. Those who think that we have lost a chance of liberating Kashmir are not aware of the factual situation. However, by vacating the heights on our appeal, the Mujahideen have created another opportunity which will, insha Allah, lead to the freedom of Kashmir.

He said that this opportunity is efforts for solution of Kashmir problem through bilateral talks, adding attention, interest and pressure of the international powers are necessary for the success of these efforts.

Nawaz Sharif said, "The United Nations had given right of self-determination to Kashmiris by passing resolutions fifty years ago. These resolutions were not passed by Pakistan but by the United Nations. Why doesn't India act upon those resolutions?" he asked. "Are disputes resolved in this manner?" he questioned.

It was in this backdrop, the joint statement following his

participation in a meeting between regional

land and air forces use at Kargil sector was on the level of a large-scale war, the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister said that it was his firm opinion that Pakistan and India can only aggravate their problems through war instead of resolving any problems. "I have said many times that Kashmir issue should be resolved through peaceful means."

Nawaz Sharif said that not only the people of Pakistan and India but the international community had also entertained hopes after the February's Lahore declaration that the two countries, with record of world's most longstanding tension, will now move on the path of peace.

Especially, he said, the views uttered by Prime Minister Vajpayee at the Minar-e-Pakistan were appreciable and expressed his desire to bury the past bitterness and attitudes and enter into a new era of mutual relations. "I also welcomed this. Even as we were preparing to hold talks under the Lahore declaration, the Indian Parliament was dissolved and fresh elections announced," the Prime Minister said.

On the other hand, the struggle for Kashmir liberation, which had been gaining momentum over the last 11 years, got accelerated as Kashmiri Mujahideen reached the heights of Kargil. The Prime Minister said when Vajpayee phoned him to express concern over the situation, he proposed to his Indian counterpart a meeting between regional

land and air forces use at Kargil sector was on the level of a large-scale war, the Prime Minister said.

He said the Indians also fired at Pakistani territories from across the line of control, hitting the innocent citizens and those on military duty on this side of line of control. India, also made war-level deployments on Pakistan borders and sent its naval forces close to Pakistan's territorial waters. The missiles with nuclear warheads were directed towards us and the air force was put on alert.

The Prime Minister eulogised the Pakistan armed forces for making preparations to counter this sudden threat with surprised efficiency and rapidity. He also paid his tributes to all those who were martyred in the wake of Indian firing and sympathised with those who suffered losses during Indian firing. "We will help

them as soon as possible in their rehabilitation," the Prime Minister also saluted the armed forces personnel who embraced shahadat or were wounded while serving on the line of control. The Prime Minister also paid tributes to the valour of Kashmiri Mujahideen who stunned the many-times numerically stronger enemies on the world's highest and difficult battlefield of Kargil and thwarted the enemy's concerted aerial and ground attacks. "They proved that they can go to any extent to crown their struggle with success."

Prime Minister said the real leadership had its eye not on power but on the security of the masses. If it has to risk its popularity or power for the safety of the country and its masses, it should do so, without any wasting any moment. "Whatever decision, I have taken, it is for the protection of the interest of the country and the people," he said.

"If your faith is firm, then without caring for the opposition of any one, you should take the decisions which you consider are fair, just and based on the truth," he said.

He reiterated that Kashmiris' spirit of freedom just could not be crushed by force. "They will continue their struggle. Freedom is their right. Pakistani masses will be with them as long as they get their right. We will never leave them alone," said Nawaz Sharif. He also mentioned that it was his old dream to take Pakistan to the dizzying heights, said he. He had never given importance to any interest or fear in his drive for the realization of this objective.

Nawaz Sharif reminded the people when India was testing one missile after another and the world, instead of stopping it, was pressuring Pakistan to keep it from entering the race. However, he had rejected every pressure and decided to test Ghauri and Shaheen missiles. Many pressures came following it, but he had not budged his steps, he added.

The liberation struggle itself was a war of the largely unarmed against the power of the Pakistani army. The people went out with bamboo staves, poor indigenous weapons, against those they had come to see as an occupying force.

At Independence the economy was shattered — centuries

ago.

Courtesy : The Dawn/APP of Pakistan

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