

Guns Down in the LoC

BJP-led Indian government was chauvinistic, but what Pakistanis did in Kargil was nothing unusual in the context of the Kashmir conflict, says **Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz**

THE Kargil war is officially over, although both sides will eye each other with suspicion for some time. There are evidences of the 'intruders' pulling out from the strategic heights they occupied in Kargil. Indian Army has a sense of relief out of the disengagements from the war they were finding itself. Just what shape the imposed ceasefire in Kargil would take from this stage, however remains unclear. The war has apparently shattered the confidence of those who desperately promoted the cause of 'good' neighbourliness between the two arch rivals of the subcontinent. Doubts abound if the relationship can be brought back even to the pre-war level. Everyone agrees that peace and security have been the first casualties of the mistrust the war has generated.

What Pakistanis did in Kargil was nothing unusual in the context of the Kashmir conflict. Kargil has been the scene of artillery duels and sporadic fightings for the control of tactically advantageous positions for years. As a matter of fact, the strategem has been prevalent all along the Line of Control many stretches of which are yet to be delineated. India did the same thing in Siachen during 1983-84. The only blunder Pakistan seems to have committed pertains to her choice of timing. Only after a month or so of the much publicised Lahore Declaration, Pakistani enterprise in Kargil did have the appearance of a be-

trayal which the international community found hard to stomach.

A beleaguered Mr Nawaz Sharif has now to squarely face the challenges from multiple sources. The hawks of the country's powerful Army who were believed to have secretly initiated the Kargil operation, the influential Inter-Services Intelligence who could have masterminded it and, of course, myriad battle-hardened militant groups operating from Pakistan remain his source of anxiety. Pakistan People's Party, the country's main opposition which was trounced by Sharif's PML in the last general election and went into hibernation after the conviction of its leader Ms Benazir Bhutto has sprung back to life — thanks to the bungling in Kashmir and Pakistan's international isolation. Relieved of the Kargil war and rescued by the IMF, Sharif will now find battle harder on the domestic front.

The Kashmir issue is being

against the incumbent government.

Although the issue was practically dead after 1972 Simla Agreement, Kashmir once again moved to the centre stage of Pakistan's domestic politics with the beginning of the ongoing insurgency in the valley. The credit for an extremely hawkish stand on Kashmir goes to Ms Bhutto who, with her pro Indian image built up by a decade long martial law regime, wanted to break free of it after she became prime minister in 1988. She and her party will now decry Sharif's retreat from Kargil and the peace agreement he struck. The opposition in Pakistan is already up in arms against the establishment in Islamabad which is accused of a 'sell out' in Washington.

Although India does not have a Kashmir issue the way the Pakistanis have, they have hugely politicised the Kargil war as a major plank of election due in the autumn. In an attempt of one upmanship, the politicians have brought in issues and arguments over Kargil which will only raise India's stake in Kashmir. While the opposition Congress has blamed the caretaker government of BJP for abysmal intelligence failure and being caught unawares in Kargil, the BJP has taken resort to its RSS stand of national chauvinism. To hide its clumsy conduct of war which was admittedly slow and sluggish, it later fell back to an attempt to create a war hysteria across the country. Desperate to

Tashkent process he became a hero and that contributed to his political ascendancy in the late sixties.

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The BJP, by its dangerous rhetoric and chauvinism will be susceptible to pressures to open up new areas for operation. Widening the conflict is a danger that can be precipitated by hawks on both sides of the border. The war has already hardened the attitude on either side of the divide and demolished the hopes for an architecture of amity, understanding and friendship. The road to meaningful peace may be, by all reckoning, drenched with more blood.

cover up its monumental failure in forestalling a Pakistani intrusion across the Line of Control, the BJP resorted to aggressive rhetorics.

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Kargil Fallout

The Kargil fiasco has been a landmark in the history of Kashmir liberation movement and it is going to have far-reaching effects on its course, writes **A. A. Salaria**

THERE is consensus among the people that the July 12 address of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Kargil situation was a flop. He disclosed a few facts but glossed over many, talking glibly most of the time with his tongue in cheek. The justification he offered for a turnabout in the official Kashmir policy was unconvincing.

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parleys on Kashmir reach a dead-end, at least the two countries have acquired a temporary respite to make another attempt for the settlement of the issue through talks.

(i) **Kashmir Issue internationalised:** Over the decades, the main objective of the Indian diplomacy has been to localize the Kashmir conflict and reduce it to the level of a regional bilateral dispute. It had succeeded in achieving this end as, both in Simla Accord and its off-shoot the Lahore Declaration, it has been laid down that negotiations on Kashmir would be exclusively bilateral. This achievement of India has been nullified in the Kargil crisis.

The occupation of military posts in the Kargil-Dras sector by Mujahideen and the danger posed to the supply-lines to Indian garrisons in the region, so much unnerved A.B. Vajpayee that he was literally running from pillar to post, appealing and begging world leaders to intervene and get the posts vacated to his government from Siachen and almost certain defeat in the coming elections. This action of Mr Vajpayee internationalized the Kashmir issue, making it a focus of world attention and raising its status to a 'flash-point' of nuclear war in the South Asia. The Washington Declaration did the rest.

(ii) **Credit Side:**

(i) Setback: Despite these advantages, the seamy side of the Washington accord has disappointed the majority of the people. The accord has made a serious blow to the momentum of freedom struggle. A God-sent opportunity to accelerate the struggle and carry it to its logical conclusion has been lost, due to the faint-hearted and pusillanimous policies of the ruling junta. Perched in their bunkers on snow-clad high mountain tops, the few hundred Mujahideen had put up a heroic resistance to the huge Indian troops, inflicting heavy casualties and forcing them to retreat. The Indian army was virtually cornered, because the supply-lines to Siachen and Laddakh were exposed to attack.

Carrying food and ammu-

nition supplies by helicopters to the huge Indian garrisons was almost impossible. The garrisons were therefore faced with two alternatives — starvation or surrender. The winter and heavy snowfall were around the corner, rendering the posts absolutely impregnable. The expected surrender of Indian troops would not only have been a windfall for the freedom struggle but also avenged the 1971 defeat of Pakistan army in East Pakistan and thus ended the score with India.

(iii) **Isolation:** Bluff, bluster and intensive spurious propaganda have been the effective instruments used by India to malign Pakistan and defame it at the international level. The campaign has met with considerable success. The main charge which has stuck to Pakistan is that the 'infiltrators' occupying the Kargil posts, were not Kashmiri Mujahideen, as claimed by Pakistan, but its army regulars. Indian agencies got published full-page advertisements in the western media, accusing Pakistan of falsehood and deceit. Circumstantial evidence to prove this charge was provided by the Premier Sharif by accepting the demand for the withdrawal of the Mujahideen and the promptitude with which the plan was implemented. No effort has been made by Pakistan to counter this propaganda and India is reported to be thinking of lodging a complaint with the UN against Pakistan's duplicity. As a result of these un-contradicted charges, Pakistan stands

isolated in the comity of nations. Most of the western and US papers, including the weekly *Time* and *Newsweek*, are publishing anti-Pakistan stories. *The Time*, in its issue of July 12, has printed, on its title page, the photograph of a Pakistani soldier, alleged to be inside the Indian-held Kashmir beyond the LoC, while inside the magazine there is a story of an un-named Pakistani soldier who managed to abscond from the Pakistani troops who were defending the Kargil posts.

(iv) **One-sided accord:** The Washington Declaration is lopsided. Instead of demanding a simultaneous pull-out of Indian troops from Siachen and withdrawal of seven lakh army from Kashmir, it focuses on Kargil alone. It reveals a definite tilt towards India.

Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan

A Rapprochement Move

There is evidence to show that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is seeking to ingratiate itself with India when the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition is still in power. **D.B.S. Jeyaraj writes**

T HE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) seems intent on launching a campaign that would help it achieve a rapprochement of sorts with India. Although 'well-wishers' of the LTTE in India have been pushing its case for several years, the Tigers themselves seem to be doing it, and actively so, after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre came into being in 1998. For instance, LTTE propaganda no longer gloats over the 'great triumph over the world's fourth largest army.' Instead there is a constant refrain that New Delhi should revise its Sri Lankan policy, without specifying how. It is becoming strikingly evident that the LTTE's hope is to ingratiate itself with India, when a political configuration led by the BJP is in power. An illustrative case is the LTTE's action in challenging through legal means the extension of the ban that India imposed on it in 1992. The Tigers did not follow this course of action on previous occasions, that is, in 1994 and 1996, when the ban came up for review, even though that option was available.

They sought that remedy, though unsuccessfully, only last year when the ban came up for a similar review. The LTTE also stated its current position towards India succinctly in a press release in which it denied allegations of a conspiracy against Sonia Gandhi. It said: 'The LTTE wishes to state emphatically that it has no intention of interfering in the internal politics of India, nor will it act in any way prejudicial to Indian national interests.' Ever since the Kargil crisis escalated, the LTTE has apparently remained consistent with its declaration that it would abide by its professed position in support of India's interests.

The Wanni-based LTTE radio, *Pulligal Kural* (Voice of

Tigers), broadcasts news items and commentary that are favourable to India and critical of Pakistan. The Tiger daily circulated in the Wanni, *Eelantham* (Sound of Eelam), too has followed suit. The Tiger-controlled media of the Tamil diaspora have also been pro-India.

Some Tiger journals have stated in recent times that the organisation has sent 'declarations of support' to the Indian government directly. According to these journals, the LTTE's London-based political adviser, Anton Balasingham, has faxed these letters to relevant agencies on instructions from LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran himself. Supportive missives are said to have been transmitted to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Defence Minister George Fernandes, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, Home Minister L.K. Advani, Law Minister Ram Jethmalani and Power and Energy Minister Ranganathan Kumaramangalam. The content of the letters has not been revealed. There are reports that Balasingham also spoke to two Cabinet Ministers and a Secretary to the Government over phone, extending support. It has also been pointed out that the Tigers have expressed support to India while Sri Lanka is officially 'neutral' but secretly 'partial' towards Pakistan.

There has been no independent confirmation of these reports. Even as the LTTE made a tentative foray into the realm of subcontinental affairs, events in the island-nation were of an interestingly assorted nature. On the battle front it became clear that the Government now hoped to establish a land route to the Jaffna peninsula via the Mannar-Pooneryn road on the northwestern coast. Aware of this manoeuvre, the Tigers are now offering stiff resistance.

This drastically affected the distribution of food supplies. As a result, an alternative has been proposed by the Government and accepted by the LTTE. Ironically, the new route is along the A-9 Highway between Jaffna and Vavuniya, for the control of which Government troops launched the bitter campaign codenamed 'Jayasikku' from May 1997 to December 1998. The Army could not proceed beyond

Mankulam on that road and had to seek another route - the Mannar-Pooneryn road. Now the stretch of road between Vavuniya and Mankulam is to be utilised as a point of entry for civilians. It is envisaged that all civilians going into the Tiger-controlled region would be checked at Thandikulam and then transported in Army buses to Mankulam. Likewise people who venture out from LTTE areas will be brought from Mankulam and checked at Poyaadikolankulam. The same rules will apply to vehicles taking rations.

The willingness of the LTTE to allow new entry points on the A-9 highway itself has been necessitated by the severe food shortage. The reality is that if rations sent by the Government are restricted, there are no alternative sources of food supply for the people of the Wanni. Even at the best of times enough food was not available. Now, food scarcity is acute. Opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe has accused the Government in Parliament of using food as a weapon of war. Further compounding the civilian's misery is the callous manner in which the LTTE itself manipulates food distribution in areas it controls. Official circles have alleged that the LTTE siphons off for its own consumption 20 per cent of all food rations immediately upon their arrival. A recent report of the University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) states that the Tigers have introduced compulsory military training for all able-bodied persons in the Wanni.

The intensity of training differs according to gender, age and physical fitness. What is tragic, however, is that while the Government is criticised for using food as a weapon, the LTTE too is using food distribution as an instrument of coercion. The UTHR says that people who refuse to take military training are denied their rations. Even as this goes on, Tiger propagandists abroad proclaim that the people of the Wanni are gearing up for a 'people's war'. The position on the ground is, however, the opposite of this. Moreover, the LTTE decision to resort to crude modes

By arrangement of the *Frontline magazine* of India.

'Kolkata' Incites Debate in Calcutta

What's in a name? Well, **Sakayesen Mittra** thinks there's a lot one can think of

not."

Some eminent personalities in the city, however, made it clear that the change would be perfect. Noted writer Sunil Gangopadhyay said on July 26, 'I have no idea why such a hue and cry is being raised on this issue. The state Government has taken the right decision in changing the name of the state from West Bengal to Bangla. We are Bengalis and we should be proud of this. I also do not think that this will cause any sort of confusion with our neighbours Bangladesh. We have quite a lot similarities going with Bangladesh. So it is quite natural that our state should be called Bangla.'

Two noted film personalities namely Soumitra Chatterjee and Mithun Chakrabarty have also supported the state government on this issue. Both said, 'There is no justification in West Bengal. We do not lie to the West of Bengal. If east Bengal can become Bangladesh, what is the fault in West Bengal becoming Bangla. There are a large number of politicians who have not been able to accept the close links that we are developing with our neighbours on the other side of the border. That is the main reason why some are against the change of name.'

The popular opinion may be for the change. However, within

the Congress party there has been a mini-war on the issue. Congress elected members of the state Assembly are now openly questioning the decision that the party took to support the Left Front Government on the issue. A senior vice president of state unit Subrata Mukherjee said, 'Our leader in

the Assembly Atish Sinha accepted the proposal without even consulting the party. He has no authority to do that.'

Other leaders of the party have openly criticised Sinha on the issue. A harassed Sinha on July 26 said, 'We have called a meeting of the executive state committee on July 29, to reassess the situation. The party policy will then be announced regarding the change of names.' Sources in the Central Home Ministry said that if the recommendation had come from the state Assembly, it may not be accepted by the Centre.

The change of names are handled by a department called the 'Ministers and Governments' in the Home Ministry. The last time when the name of a state was changed was in 1973 when Mysore became Karnataka. Giving a number of other examples, the source said, 'It took three years for Bombay to become Mumbai, while Madras became Chennai in only seven days. On the other hand, the department has not changed the name of Ahmedabad to Karnavati even though their assembly passed the motion in 1961. Even then as far as the city is concerned, the transformation will not be much of a problem.'

It will be for the state. The department has already started talking to a number of prominent people of the city regarding the change. 'The idea is to feel the pulse of the inhabitants. We have already had protests. Even political parties have been opposed to the change,' disclosed the source.

He also added, 'To change the name of a state a Constitutional amendment is necessary. So ultimately it will be for the parliament to decide whether the name of the state will change or

not.'

This is one controversy that will linger for some time now.

Already, the *Asian Age* which

has an edition here has started giving the dateline 'Kolkata'.

Editorials are being written,

street corner past time for and

against the change are the

rise everyday.'

Calcutta's Dead, Long live Kolkata...

By renaming the city, the guardian angels of Bengali culture hope to resurrect their lost pride, writes **Soutik Biswas**

WHAT Bengal thinks

Mumbai, the move, say its opponents, will only unleash fascist forces in a city that's long been known for its multi-culturalism.

This isn't the first time there's been a faddist chorus of approval among the rulers and a section of the citizenry to rename the city and the state. The Marxists had once formed a committee to consider new names for Bengal. The latest move stems from the efforts of the Calcutta-based Bhasha Shahid Smarak Samiti (Memorial For Martyrs of Language Society), a cultural organisation floated last year to promote Bengali language and culture by invoking memories of citizens who died in the inspiring language movements of undivided Bengal. The Samiti, which includes such denizens as filmmaker Mrinal Sen and litterateur Ananda Shankar Ray, came up with a 10-point wishlist some time back. That list included a demand for renaming Calcutta and West Bengal, making Bengali compulsory till Class VIII in the state's schools, and launching a 24-hour Bengali TV channel.

We can't let the Bengali language and culture die just because there are more important things to do, like development and improving the work culture,"

But saving Bengali culture and identity, clearly, tops the government agenda these days.

Typically, half-a-dozen pressure groups have emerged. The Samiti, for example, has erected a small open air stage on the Maidan, where poets recite their work and local folk arts are on display. Also coming up is *Nabobagan*, a motley group of Bengali journalists, managers, barristers, doctors, sportspeople and police officers, which wants to usher in a 'second renaissance' in Bengal.

Registered as a trust, it plans to organise mobile cells that'll travel through the city and districts to goad Bengalis into opening businesses instead of looking for jobs. It also plans to give away awards to Bengali language toppers in secondary examinations.

'It's a question of Bengali nationalism, not chauvinism,' says Ashoke Dasgupta, editor of *Aajkal*, who also heads the trust.

The effort's to build the economic backbone of the community, that's been broken.'

Meanwhile, the flight of capital continues unabated, its infamous work ethic refuses to

improve and militant unionism

continues to hold Calcutta's citizenry to ransom. A couple of centuries after Job Charnock, a

petty British trader, pitched his