

A Losing Battle?

In the backdrop of the hijack episode, M Abdul Hafiz looks at how Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is handling his fight against, which he calls, terrorism

WHEN on the New Year's eve a sombre Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee vowed 'to join hands across nations to rid the world of terrorism' his resolve lacked credibility and sounded hollow. Because only hours before he had to make an awkward decision that, in the perception of many Indians, amounted to surrender before terrorism.

Indeed, as the country's Foreign Minister Mr Jaswant Singh escorted three 'terrorists' to their freedom in Kandahar, there was among the public a mixed feeling of ecstasy for what they got in return and an anguish for spectacle of capitulation that had to be watched in utter helplessness. An early assertion by the prime minister that his government will not bend before such a terror turned into a mere submission only with the consoling words as to his government's ability to 'substantially scale down' the hijackers' demands. It was an odd antithesis to the high voltage performance of the hero of Kargil only months before when he led India to national resurrection of sorts. Exactly

ten years before a similar compromise for the release of Rubaya, the daughter of India's home minister eroded Prime Minister VP Singh's political credibility which could no more be restored. There is no visible sign as yet that Kandahar episode will have same effect on Vajpayee government.

While the rejoicing for the rescued hostages was limited only to the relieved kith and kin, there has however been nationwide indignation over the drama around the hijacked Indian airline flight IC 814. The common men of nuclear India find it difficult to reconcile to the humiliation resulting from the way five masked militants brought the authority to its knees. As the crisis surfaced the country's crisis management group remained baffled and the National Security Council delayed its decisions. RAW — the country's external intelligence agency failed to preempt the hijack as also the crack anti-terrorist team was unable to intercept the hijacked aircraft in Amritsar. Consequently it was a total despair in which the nation remained drowned for a

complete traumatic week. India's humiliation was not confined only to dealing with the hijackers and conceding to their demands. She had also to stomach the embarrassment of doing it in a country and with the people not officially recognised by her. It was a challenge by itself to establish contact with Taliban authority which was obviously sympathetic to the hijackers' cause but at the same time a vital link for the diffusion of the crisis. In spite of India's support to Najibullah regime which the Taliban pulled down the latter maintained ostensible neutrality during the bargain and extended courtesy and assistance to the Indians and others presumably to wash off their rogue image. Yet for India, it was a bitter pill to swallow because to have vital access to Taliban leader Indians had often to go through Pakistani interlocutors. Given the Taliban's duplicitous conduct, many felt later that Singh's visit to Kandahar where he had to rub shoulders with the same sort of people including three militants to be released was another ignominy.

Worse still is the event's fallout on strife-torn Kashmir valley which seemed to be at the heart of the crisis and where India claims to be fighting a cross border terrorism. Unfortunately for India, during the post-Kargil period her problems in Kashmir have multiplied and they seem to have shifted from the LOC (line of control) to deep into interior in the shape of increased militancy.

The militants' suicide missions have now crashed through hitherto impregnable targets. The deal at Kandahar will undoubtedly embolden the militants in Kashmir — at least in the short run.

The swapping of the dreaded militants at Kandahar could not have come at a worse me for Kashmir where the insurgency has recently reached a new peak. The security experts reckon that the release of fearful troika of terrorist at Kandahar would certainly deal a serious blow to the sagging morale of the government forces, currently the target of increasing militant offensive.

According to observers, a

dangerous precedence was set in 1989 when the abduction of Rubaya was settled with the release eight militants by VP Singh. Thereafter the process went on unabated with the militants holding the hostage at ransom and successfully securing the release of their compatriots. JKLF activists kidnapped the daughter of a National Conference MP in 1991. Prime Minister Chandra Sekhar struck a similar deal with the abductors to ensure her rescue. During the same year an Indian oil executive director, Mr K Doraiswamy also was kidnapped in Srinagar. The kidnappers demanded in exchange important militants which was conceded to. Prime minister Narashima Rao also could not devise a new strategy when confronted with the crisis of militants' siege of Hazratbal shrine during September-October of 1993.

For India, the fight against terrorism has rarely involved easy options. And after years of bloodying its nose against the terrorists, it continues to be a soft target for them.

ber to be 1000.

* Attack on the PRO of the 15 corp HQ denting its all poor security net substantiates the analysts' claim that India's security precautions was a mismatch for Kashmiri environment where the population at large supported the guerrilla war against India's federal forces.

* It is learnt that weapon, equipment and ammunition of Indian forces was not only old but also inadequate. Newspapers revealed that India had to make emergency purchases of arms, equipment and ammunition to meet the demand from the front during the conflict.

* Although the world was made to believe that India has a well-trained army, the Kargil unfortunately gave a poor account of the training and valour of Indian forces.

* Indian forces were so terrified that they did not dare to cross the line of control in pursuit of the intruders fearing that Pakistan might open another front if such an operation was undertaken.

* India tasted success in the field of diplomacy by isolating Pakistan in their race for winning outside support. Convincing USA to restrain Pakistan from extending support to the guerrillas and subsequently ensuring that China does not lend her support to Pakistan was the outcome of India's astute diplomacy.

* However, the clash in Kargil does not promise an end to the intriguing military situation that prevails around the border between India and Pakistan.

* Guerillas' withdrawal from the trenches due to US intervention may have given the ruling BJP a handle to win in the national hustings of 1999, it has at the same time fanned the turmoil in entire Kashmir and in the troubled states of India where guerrilla wars are being waged against the Indian federation.

* It is learnt that India's force mobilisation scheme was outmoded and outworn. It took the 15 corps over two weeks to start facing the situation.

* Created division of opinion between the government and armed forces.

* Pakistan had to relent to outside pressure to withdraw their support to the Mujahideen.

* Affected the morale of the people and the ranks of armed forces in particular for withdrawing support to Mujahideen.

* Resultant strained relationship between government and armed forces caused dis-

missal of senior officers of armed forces which paved the way for the 'grand finale' that brought removal of the government by a military coup.

* Pakistan has been able to internationalise the Kashmir issue which ought to have been bilateral issue under the Simla Accord of 1972.

* It is learnt that weapon, equipment and ammunition of Indian forces was not only old but also inadequate. Newspapers revealed that India had to make emergency purchases of arms, equipment and ammunition to meet the demand from the front during the conflict.

* Although the world was

made to believe that India has a well-trained army, the Kargil unfortunately gave a poor account of the training and valour of Indian forces.

* Indian forces were so terrified that they did not dare to cross the line of control in pursuit of the intruders fearing that Pakistan might open another front if such an operation was undertaken.

* India tasted success in the field of diplomacy by isolating

Pakistan in their race for winning outside support. Convincing USA to restrain Pakistan from extending support to the guerrillas and subsequently ensuring that China does not lend her support to Pakistan was the outcome of India's astute

diplomacy.

* However, the clash in Kargil does not promise an end to the intriguing military situation that prevails around the border between India and Pakistan.

* Guerillas' withdrawal from

the trenches due to US intervention may have given the ruling BJP a handle to win in the national hustings of 1999, it has at the same time fanned the

turmoil in entire Kashmir and in the troubled states of India where guerrilla wars are being waged against the Indian federation.

* It is learnt that India's force mobilisation scheme was

outmoded and outworn. It took the 15 corps over two weeks to start facing the situation.

* Created division of opinion

between the government and armed forces.

* Pakistan had to relent to

outside pressure to withdraw

their support to the Mujahideen.

* Affected the morale of the

people and the ranks of armed

forces in particular for with- drawing support to Mujahideen.

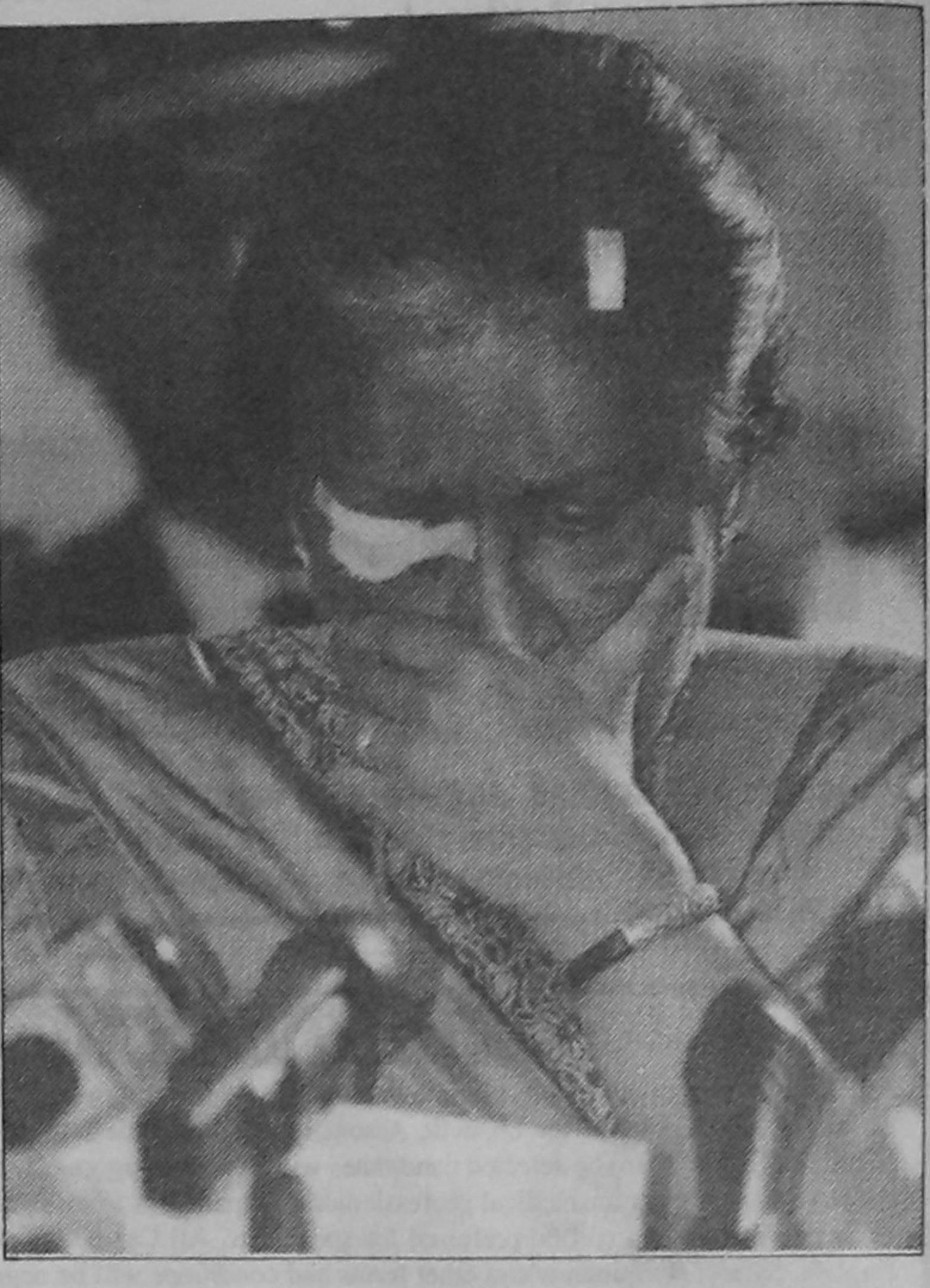
* Resultant strained relation-

ship between government and

armed forces caused dis-

A Turning Point?

Traumatic recent events in Sri Lanka unfold a new crisis which the political system might find it impossible to tackle given the dangerously widening ethnic rift. Paful Bidwai writes



OPINION

Kargil - a No-winner Episode?

ZA Khan

It was painful to observe India and Pakistan locked in a foohold contest on the snow-capped ares of Kargil with extraordinary obstinacy. Inspired by the national hatred and military ardour, the Pakistan-backed Mujahideen intruded into Indian administered Kashmir and fought, perhaps, to settle old scores. About Pakistan, one wonders whether it was good in supporting the Mujahideen in the Kargil episode. Although the balance sheet of Kargil campaign is yet to be revealed, and the military analysts may draw intriguing conclusions about the victor and the vanquished, yet Kargil in any case deserves a page in the history of the second millennium.

Kashmir - a cliff-hanger in the South Asian politics, has been a flashpoint since the partition some 52 years ago. There has been a several rounds of war on the fate of disputed but strategically located Kashmir as it dominated the geopolitical landscape of the region for past five decades. Kashmir borders with China, India and Pakistan and all these countries have stakes in Kashmir because of its strategic importance. If Kashmir is held by India then she may concentrate on regaining the territories lost to China in 1962 and her nagging problems with Pakistan will be solved which will reduce inter-border tension thus enable

withdrawal of troops from this sector to be deployed against China. If it is held by Pakistan, its security umbrella will be strengthened in the northeast. China, which had been trying in vain since 1962 to bring India not to lend support to Dalai Lama and recognise the current line of control in Aksaichin and Thangla sector is likely to feel happy considering Chinese warm relationship with Pakistan and this might help China to consolidate her hold on Tibet and disputed Aksa China. As far as in politics and strategy, China never threw any indication in this direction. Rather she is concentrating to take up a few confidence-building measures for trade and commerce in India.

Kargil - the highest peak on the Indian Kashmir, has witnessed a fierce battle that lasted over a quarter of a year, still seems to be a terrain in trouble as Indian forces have not yet cleared the area of 'intruders'. Some even say that the 'intruders' are still around.

The author does not intend to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend

to declare the winner in Kargil campaign but is inclined to probe as to what Kargil was about after the first round is over, we may try to analyse how did it go and who could be declared winner. Was there really a winner?

The author does not intend