

KARGIL MISADVENTURE

The Kargil misadventure by Pakistan 25 years ago changed many things in the sub-continent. First it confirmed that Pakistan as an utterly irresponsible State and a threat to the global peace and security. Secondly, it firmed up India's view of Pakistan as a rouge State where the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Thirdly, it forced India to become more realistic about the external threats and to prepare for it. The entire plan of sending troops to the icy heights of Kargil peaks by Pakistan Army chief General Pervez Musharraf without thinking about repercussions was flawed. Many Pakistani authors especially senior journalists and military officers including those close to the architect of the operation have blamed Musharraf for it. One person in position could risk a war with a neighbour just a month or so the top leaders of these countries – Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Mian Nawaz Sharif had pledged to tread on the path of peace. The war showed Indian soldiers burying the Pakistanis in their national flag as Musharraf's army did not pick their bodies. It shows India as a cohesive nation fight against Pakistan. Twenty-five year later, Pakistan remains unchanged; in fact the state is more divided than ever. It's almost taken over by radicals and its economy and politics in doldrums. Its public is grappling with rising prices, political unrest and rising violence. India, on the other hand continue to shine as a democracy and is the rising economic power in the world. Indians are on high positions across the globe and Indian economy is shinning. India as a cultural and civilizational entity is the toast of the world and the country is friends with almost entire world. India is even trying to work out its differences with China while refusing to be part of any global alliance. As Mahatma Gandhi rightly said means as a important as the end. Unlike Pakistan, India continues to tread on the path of peace and development and will remains so forever.

Commemorating 25 years of Kargil victory: A tribute

RAHUL KAMBLE

Visitors to Drass, a town situated at an altitude of 10,760 feet (3,279 metres) in India-administered Kashmir, are greeted with a signboard that says at -60 degrees Celsius on January 9, 1995, it was the second-coldest inhabited place on the planet. Drass, located in Kargil district, has an additional claim to fame. In the summer of 1999, it was on its western edge with rocky and barren Himalayan peaks that India and Pakistan fought their last war.

That year, Pakistan's military and Kashmiri rebels occupied strategic positions on the Indian side of the de facto border between them (known as the Line of Control or LoC), prompting a counter-offensive by India. While Pakistan had named its move to take over the control of Indian posts along the LoC as 'Operation Badr,' India called its offensive 'Operation Vijay'. It was a war fought in the era of satellite news channels. The battles were broadcast directly to homes in both countries, making Drass and Kargil as a whole, a symbol of India's nationalism, inspiring a raft of jingoistic Bollywood movies. This July 26 is the 25th Kargil Vijay Divas. On this day in 1999, the Indian forces threw out the Pakistanis from the incursion points in the general area of Kargil, which they had illegally occupied, bringing to a close a two-month war.

It was a tough war, fought on sheer grit and courage, as gutsy young officers, most of them in their twenties, led equally brave soldiers up naked rock faces and managed to evict the enemy within weeks. Names such as Tiger Hill, Tololing, Point 5140, Point 4700, Three Pimples, Chhorbat La, Point 5203, Point 4875, Khalubar, and Jubar Top became household names across the country. On 26 July 1999, the Kargil conflict officially came to an end. The Indian Army an-



nounced the complete eviction of Pakistani intruders, but a price was paid for it in blood and tears. We lost 527 of our brave soldiers; 1363 came back wounded. The Indian army has marked July 26 – the day the Kargil war ended – as "Vijay Divas" (Victory Day).

Every year for the past 25 years, the whole nation celebrates proudly on this day. Army also undertakes commemorative treks on the icy features, where our Braves became invincibles. What seemed an impossible task to the world, was accomplished in a mere 50 days, with all the features lost, back under our control.

The '50 Day War' as it is fondly called, was a record in itself. Whenever the story of Kargil is told, it shall be incomplete without paying homage to the steely re-

solve and cold courage of these young men who went to fight for their nation knowing that they might never return. Barely out of the academy, they fought against all odds, with single-minded devotion, and set new benchmarks in heroism. Their spirit and daring will be difficult to replicate. The war will always be remembered for its strategic and tactical surprise, the self-imposed national strategy of restraint in keeping the war limited to the Kargil-Siachen sector, military strategy and planning, and the dedication, determination and daring junior leadership at the tactical level.

In fiercely fought combat actions, on the most difficult terrain that gave immense advantage to the enemy, we were able to evict Pakistani troops from most of their surreptitiously occupied posi-

tions. The Pakistani leadership was forced to sue for a ceasefire and seek the withdrawal of its troops from the remaining areas. Operation Vijay – the Indian codename for the war – was a blend of strong and determined political, military and diplomatic actions, which enabled us to transform an adverse situation into a military and diplomatic victory. As two prime ministers of Pakistan later acknowledged, 'Kargil war was Pakistan's biggest blunder and disaster.'

A reflection on the Kargil War can never be complete without a mention of the brilliant junior leadership that we witnessed during battles.

Such acts by young officers and men can never be forgotten. They make us proud. Commanding officers of many infantry battalions displayed steely resilience and single-minded devotion to duty. There were actions by young artillery forward observation officers and battery commanders who took over infantry companies when their company commander colleagues were killed. A victory in war is achieved when battles are won.

Battles are won when soldiers put duty before themselves. Soldiers who put their lives at stake in wars and war-like situations and expect nothing in return. But what the nation owes to them is recognition and gratitude. For every single brave deed noticed and recognized, many went unnoticed in the fog of war. These legendary tales deserve mention not only in our military history books but also in school textbooks to serve as inspiration for young people. This success shall not be taken for granted. With heights averaging 15000 feet, bone-chilling temperatures and a dominating hostility, the Kargil war in itself is a global legend.

(The author is freelance writer; views are personal)

PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL FALLS FROM GRACE

K STOMAR

Politicians have been grabbing the power by following Machiavavillan principle of showing complete disrespect to means, the morality and values. This is true of Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fell from the grace after facing humiliating defeat while seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament.

While seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament, Prachnda faced the worst type of humiliating defeat as he got 63 votes (Rashtria Swatantra Party-21, CPN(US)-10 and his party-32) as against 194 votes of new coalition combination of Nepali Congress (89 MPs) and Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (78 MPs) which also got support from other smaller parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party (Uppendra faction) etc. in the house of 275 where majority mark was 138 only. Oli has staked claim after president Ram Chandra Poedel invited the political parties having strength to form the government.

In a positive move, Dr. Rajan Bhatara, the Foreign Affairs Department chief and a Standing Committee member of the CPN-UML emphasized that CPN-UML believes that Nepal's progress or the welfare of its people can be achieved only by adopting a Pro-India stance. He made it clear that the

party's chairman, KP Sharma Oli, is keen on taking Nepal-India relations to new heights thereby aligning with the requirement and urgency of the modern era.

Due to fragile nature of democracy in Nepal, unabated and persistent instability has been trademark of the government which is evident from 16 time change of guards in the span of 13 years thereby hitting the interests of the common people in the country besides pushing the country into financial crisis and debt liabilities especially huge loans advanced by China.

In a midnight swoop and a dramatic turn of events on July 9, a secret deal was clinched between two former Prime ministers viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali and K.P.S. Oli of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) which sealed the fate of current PM, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prachanda. In this manner, yet another coalition of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Nepali Congress came into existence today following the humiliating defeat of Prachanda, a diehard loyalist of China' on the floor of house. New regime will be headed by Ex PM, Oli which had preceded withdrawal of the support to current PM, on July 3, 2024 thereby reducing it into minority. The Janata Samajwadi party led by Ashok Rai having 7 PMs also withdrew the support and recalled three minis-

ters from Prachanda government.

The coalition government will be dominated by Pro India, Nepali Congress, though a die-hard communist leader, former PM, Oli will be heading it for a term of one half year which will be followed by a takeover by former PM, Deuba of Nepali congress as agreed by two coalition partners.

Foreign policy experts say that major factors responsible for the collapse of collation of Prachnda-Oli, duo, included Power Struggle, style of functioning of prime minister, Policy Differences, Coalition Dynamics and Coalition Dynamics which may lead to more stable dispensation comprising of Nepali Congress, Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Janata Samajwadi party.

Amidst the toppling game, midnight power sharing agreement between two former Prime ministers, viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Nepali Congress and K.P.S.Oli chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) was signed on July 5, 2024 thereby leading to a sudden change of regime in Nepal. New coalition government of Oli and Deuba is bound to face multiple challenges which will be key to success otherwise its fallout could be midterm polls. The fragile nature of the new government consisting of the communists (Pro China) and Nepali Congress (Pro India) having opposing ideologies could

pose a major challenge to keep them in unison and amalgamated.

Oli and Deuba combine will be under compulsion to keep equi-distance with two regional powers viz. India and China which have got geo-political and strategic interests in the affairs of Nepal. Oli's previous stint as PM was marked by his extreme Anti India action of redrawing the map which had shown Indian territories including Lipulekh, Llimpiyadhura and Kalapani as part of Nepal. It had exasperated India which rejected this misadventure thereby terming it as baseless besides being an attempt to spoil ties. Now, as dominant partner in the coalition, the onus of checking this tendency will lie on Deuba to prevail upon Oli to come out of Anti-India mentality and protect age-old relations between two nations.

The communists regimes led by Prachanda always gave clear indications about the commitment to China which will expect new government to go ahead with Belt and Road (BRI) initiative especially when outgoing PM has approved the proposal which had been signed between two countries on May 12, 2017.

It will be an uphill task for Oli to stick to his predecessors' resolve to toe China's line about BRI as Nepali congress is totally opposed to it hence chances of any progress seem to be remote.

Budget 2024: A blueprint for long-term growth

DEEPAK SOOD

In a pivotal move aimed at strengthening India's economic prowess, the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 has made significant strides in assuring continuity of progressive reforms. There is cheer in the MSME, E-commerce and start-up worlds, which have been extended additional support as the country progresses on the road towards a Viksit Bharat. The Finance Minister made various announcements to empower the Garib, Mahila, Yuva and Kissan. The announcements made under this budget are timely and set to propel the Indian economy to new heights during the Amrit Kaal, enhancing its resilience in an ever-evolving global landscape.

A booster for MSMEs
The budget rightfully supports the bottom of the

industrial pyramid by offering much-needed ease of credit for the MSME segment. India has 633.9 lakh MSMEs, where over 99% of them qualify as micro-enterprises that make up 630.5 lakh enterprises. One of the critical reasons why micro enterprises (with investments up to INR 10 million) do not graduate to being small or medium enterprises is the lack of access to formal credit. By doubling the MUDRA loan amounts and setting up new SIDBI branches, credit will now be more accessible to these organizations. Other steps (mandatory Trade Receivables Discounting System) have improved liquidity, while Industrial parks will provide the much-needed digital support that MSMEs usually cannot afford for growth. Additionally, the new credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs

offers term loans without collateral or third-party guarantees, significantly easing the financial burden on small business owners and fostering entrepreneurship. Such positive support for this crucial sector is bound to give it the confidence to shed its risk-averse nature and grow with ambition on the road to 2047.

Skilling and Job Creation
With this budget, the Government has responded positively to the need for job opportunities and skill development among youth in our country. The continued emphasis on skilling will allow training institutions and large corporations to participate in creating a pool of professionally trained manpower that would be readily absorbed by them and the larger MSME ecosystem, which is often strained for funds for training purposes. Meticu-



lous implementation will, however, be key to setting the ball rolling in the right direction of creating jobs.

Rural Economy
The rural economy continued to receive support from the government, as strengthening this segment will be crucial for the sustained economic growth of the country. Budget 2024 had some big announcements for them that would increase productivity and food security in grains and oilseeds. Such measures will go a long way in creat-

ing new economic clusters that will support sustained growth.
With 1 crore farmers to be trained in natural farming, marketing, certification, and branding, organic farming is all set to receive a big stimulus. The focus on addressing the impact of climate on our food basket showcases the government's long-term vision towards building resilience in the ecosystem.

Start-ups and E-Commerce
There is general cheer in

the start-up ecosystem across India over the abolition of the angle tax, proposed in the budget.

Angel tax, introduced in 2012, was imposed on the capital raised by unlisted companies through the issue of shares to Indian investors if the share price exceeded the fair market value (FMV) of the company. Traders and artisans using e-commerce sites got a lift up in this budget when TDS was not just reduced but TDS delays were decriminalized.

E-commerce exports, \$2 billion now, are expected to be \$350 billion by 2030. With revised custom duties, the Government hopes to give the required fillip to these artisans/traders who sell their wares using websites, in line with its Make in India strategy.

Energy security
India is a fast-developing

economy and our energy needs are rising rapidly. By encouraging private investment in setting up small nuclear energy reactors and encouraging R&D into newer forms of nuclear energy, the budget aims to achieve India's goals of energy security.

With regular energy audits across clusters, larger commercial thermal plants and a pumped storage policy, the budget aims to help India cope with the rising demand without missing a step. However, our green economy targets are very ambitious and much more needs to be done to ensure our transition to green fuels.

Digitization of Land Records

This one step is perhaps the most impactful step the budget has outlined for the growth of India's economy. Vast tracts of our land, es-

pecially in rural India, are often embroiled in disputes with no proper documentation. This is a key hurdle in land acquisition for major projects. By digitising these records across India, the Government will end middlemen and reduce the number of land cases in the legal system. Overall, the Union Budget 2024-25 reinforces the Government's commitment to sustained long-term growth.

With strategic investments and forward-looking policies, India is poised to navigate global challenges while harnessing its immense potential for socio-economic development. The road towards Viksit Bharat could have its set of challenges, especially given the global dynamics, but the sustained vision and progressive policy support will help realise the dream of a Viksit Bharat.