

Longewala being replicated in Delhi's poll theatre

Written by Administrator

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The old cliché goes something like this — the battle lines are drawn. Talking of battle grounds, the upcoming Delhi assembly elections reminds **SIDHARTH MISHRA** of the Battle of Longewala in the western theatre during the 1971 war, when an infantry company demolished the campaign of a mechanised infantry brigade. Battle of Longewala was later made into a famous film, *Border*, which the capital identifies with the human catastrophe its maiden show witnessed at Uphaar theatre.

Coming back to the poll campaign, as of now Arvind Kejriwal finds himself perfectly fitting in the role of Major Kuldeep Singh Chandpuri, the brave company commander of 23 Punjab Regiment, “who ensured that all his assets were correctly employed, and made the most use of his strong defensive position, and weaknesses created by errors in enemy tactics.”

On the other hand the BJP leadership's performance so far has been comparable to the Pakistani commanders who launched with “little or no route reconnaissance, with their campaign bogged in terrain not suitable for the movement of armoured vehicles.”

The change in the complexion of the BJP state unit just ahead of the nomination of poll papers underlines the state of nervousness which has come to grip the ruling party. This edginess cast its shadow at the 11 Ashoka Road headquarters of the saffron party after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi failed at his January 10 rally at the Ramlila Grounds to generate the kind of enthusiasm among the voters and the cadres that he is generally accustomed to.

To overcome the ‘crisis’ within, the party's central leadership went for the surgery which has ended purging it of the loyalists and replacing them with party-hoppers. Deployment of heavyweights alone, borrowed from beyond their cadres and ideology can hardly be to the assistance of the BJP in overcoming the stout challenge thrown by the Aam Aadmi Party. It defies commonsense that how could a cadre-based and ideology driven organization like BJP offer more than 10 percent of the seats, including that of the chief ministerial face Kiran Bedi, to those who have never been part of the parivar (the extended ideological family).

This, however, is not a forecast for the cakewalk of the AAP, as large and old organization are known to pick steam as the campaign progresses whereas smaller bodies lose stamina. In this case the AAP is faced not only with BJP president Amit Shah's booth-level management but a new look Congress under a credible Ajay Maken making a concerted effort to regain the lost ground.

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Unlike Longewala, Kejriwal's party also doesn't have the support of an air force to fallback upon and he would have to manoeuvre with his meager resources. With his ammunition largely being the goodwill among the city's poor and socially disenfranchised, Kejriwal has quite a battle at hand as Chandpuri too had.