

Shifting of GHQ

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Co-location of all armed forces headquarters must be recognised as a military necessity.

rates would be highly unrealistic. It has been further clarified by CDA that the army has paid the price for this land, (as well as the for sectors E 11 and D 12 reserved for three decades ago) at the rates prescribed for government departments.

It may be recalled that in 1972, Mr Bhutto took this decision on the advice and recommendations of the three Service Chiefs, and his close advisors on Defense.

Learning a lesson from the 1971 war, it was felt that joint planning and co ordination were virtually non-existent due to separate location of the three Service Headquarters (in three different cities). The arguments given then, are further strengthened by other environmental factors of later origin and are as valid today as in 1972. They are briefly reviewed below:

Proximity of Service Headquarters is a 'Sine Quo Non' of strategic planning. The ability of senior commanders and staff to meet frequently for consultations, briefings, presentation of plans, etc, is a military imperative for co-ordination and command articulation.

In times of war there are daily meetings of the DCC, and all forces chiefs, which are only possible if all of them are accessible. The Pentagon concept is the best, but even where this is not possible, all Headquarters must be located in close proximity. It may be

On 13 January I read in the papers that certain parliamentarians have moved an adjournment motion in the National Assembly to debate the sale of land to the army for the shifting of its General Headquarters to Islamabad, since they believe that CDA has suffered a loss of Rs 500 billion.

On this subject there are three misperceptions, which need to be put in their proper perspective. Firstly that GHQ is being shifted for the personal security of the President; Secondly, the move is causing a financial loss to CDA, and; thirdly, that there is no logical need for shifting the Army Headquarters from Rawalpindi to Islamabad. I am a retired officer and not a military spokesman, but I would like to offer my views, since I have been associated with this subject during my service.

The perception that the shifting of GHQ was decided for the President's personal security after the assassination attempts on his life last year, is simply not correct. The decision was taken by Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a DCC meeting on 29 March 1972. I will dwell on this logical decision taken by him 33 years ago, a little later.

The perception that this decision is causing a loss to CDA of Rs 500 billion is fictional. In reality 870 acres of land sold to the army is actually meant to be kept as an open area under army's control for the security of its Northern perimeter.

CDA has already clarified that in its Master Plan, this area was never reserved for residential or commercial purposes, but was kept as grassland for environmental protection thus any speculation on its price at commercial

be reasoned that the shifting of GHQ is not a whimsical decision, based on narrow or personal considerations. It is a thoroughly reasoned decision taken more than three decades ago by Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Consequent to his decision, CDA allocated 1400 acres in zones E 8, E 9, E 10, E 11, and D 12, to the Ministry of Defense, Joint Services Headquarters, and the three Forces Headquarters.

Subsequently the Naval Headquarters moved first to E 8 in the eighties, followed by the Air Headquarters because they were to move from other cities, hence got priority over the army. The army delayed its shifting due to the enormous cost involved and also its location in Rawalpindi. But now it has found a way to reduce the financial burden of its shifting on the National exchequer.

The entire cost of construction is programmed to be paid from the sale proceeds of the surplus land in various cantonments. Moreover the shifting will be phased over few years. Some administrative establishments, and medical installations will remain in place. In fact there is a plan to create a modern Medical City on the premises of the existing GHQ complex.

It will be opened to all the civilian population of the city. Finally, I appeal to our politicians, media persons, and others to view the shifting of GHQ in a broad national perspective, devoid of any prejudices or self party interest. Co-location of all armed forces Headquarters must be recognised as a military necessity (as it has been done worldwide) in our national interest.

electronic eaves dropping from buildings in close proximity, sabotage (easier in dense urban areas) and security of allied installations and key personnel. GHQ is vulnerable on all counts, since it has been surrounded by a dense urban environment, burgeoning at its seams.

Functional and administrative requirements have exerted their own pressure. GHQ today is not the GHQ of the sixties. The army has grown three times in size, consequently increasing the size of the Headquarters staff. Housed in nineteenth century office buildings meant for a corps sized force (Headquarters of the Northern Command of the old British Indian Army) the present population of GHQ is almost strangled.

I wish our parliamentarians could visit the offices of mid level and junior staff to see for themselves how one room meant for one person, is being shared by three to four! Or how files have been piled up to the roof, for lack of adequate space.

Proper working environments are a basic requirement for efficiency, whether in corporate, industrial, governmental or institutional sectors. Why should the personnel of the army perform any differently? There is thus a compelling necessity for the GHQ to provide a better working environment to its staff.

From the above arguments it may