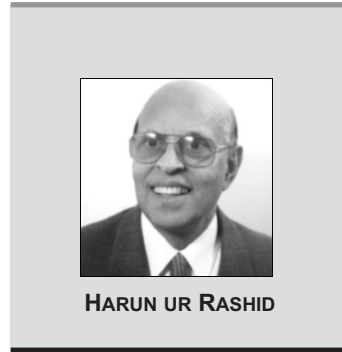


# What did Israel achieve in the 31-day war?



HARUN UR RASHID

ON July 12, when two Israeli soldiers were abducted from the Israeli-Lebanese southern border, Israel, supported by the US, had three primary aims:

- Secure the two abducted Israeli soldiers;
- Destroy the military power of Hezbollah to prevent future conflict; and
- To weaken Iran's influence in the region

Israel attacked Lebanon for 31 days with indiscriminate bombings to achieve these goals. Did it achieve them? The simple answer is: No.

## BOTTOM LINE

Hezbollah remains as popular and strong as ever in Lebanon and in the Arab world. Its leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, has become an icon in the Arab world. A new leader, similar to Gamal Abdel Nasser, has emerged, the Arabs claim. He defied Israel and the US and stood his ground. One big loser is the reputation of Israeli soldiers. The reputation it earned in a six-day war in 1967 occupying the West Bank and the Gaza has been totally shattered. Israel is perceived as weak and having a flawed understanding of what its military power can achieve.

The two Israeli soldiers are still in the hands of Hezbollah and Hezbollah's military power remains. Israel had 167 soldiers killed and already the Olmert government in Israel has come under severe criticism from all political parties because of his hasty war without gauging the consequences.

The first stage of the resolution of the Security Council (1701) that came into effect in the morning on August 14 is a "cessation of hostilities" and the second stage would constitute the "permanent ceasefire." Many analysts consider

that given the flawed policy of Israel and the Bush administration, the implementation of the second stage would be a fantasy.

The Israeli-Lebanese conflict cannot be perceived in isolation. It is a symptom of the re-writing of the balance of power in the Middle East between US-Israel and Iran and Russia.

**Winners and losers**  
This ugly and unnecessary war has many losers, but two winners. Among the losers are Israel and the US, and the winners are France and

Hezbollah, alleged to have been supported by Iran.

Israel might claim that it has won in terms of Security Council resolution 1701. However, the language the resolution employed is very flexible and expansive. It is like reading a horoscope. The star signs may mean just about whatever you want them to mean.

In terms of the resolution, Israel expects military structures of Hezbollah from the south of Lebanon would be removed. But that will not occur now. The Lebanese cabinet indefinitely

postponed a crucial meeting on August 14 dealing with plans to send half of Lebanon's troops to the south.

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Nasrallah claimed historic and strategic victory over Israel. He said Hezbollah power would not go away with destroying homes in Lebanon but only through discussions. On the other hand, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert defended his shaky position, but in reality, on the ground, Israel could not achieve what it wanted.

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What surprised military strate-

gists was the imbalance between the Israeli extensive air campaign and the limited initial ground offensive. Ehud Olmert's words did not match the action. He behaved like Churchill, but on the ground he was no Churchill.

It is true that Hezbollah's power has been somewhat contained but Hezbollah has not been beaten. Just before the cease-fire, it sent 250 rockets inside Israel to demonstrate its continuing military power.

Iran's influence has not been weakened. Rather its image has increased as one of the powers that can influence events in the region. Tehran on said on August 13 that it would not yield "to the language of threat and pressure" on its nuclear program. Iran may review its policy including its membership to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Israel, India and Pakistan are not parties to the Treaty and have nuclear warheads: North Korea withdrew from the Treaty two years ago).

Another big loser in the war is the US. It sided openly with Israel and believed in the power of Israel. After 31 days, when it found that Israel was bogged down with a costly and

lengthy war, it had to modify its position and agree with the Council resolution.

Peace in the Middle East requires an effort to mediate conflicting claims, balance competing forces, and tamp down sectarian passions. Arab people want the US to play this role but the Bush administration has so much identified itself with Israel, it has lost its credibility and mediating role in the Arab world. Some say as long as the Bush administration treats the Middle East as a zero-sum game, it will continue to lose.

It is ironic that on one hand the administration spends \$1 billion dollars through Karen Hughes, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, to raise the image of the US in the Arab world, on the other it pursues a policy of military muscle to influence other nations politically. This is a poor understanding of how to use hard power to the benefit of the US.

One country in the Council became taller, that is France. France has indicated that it would be willing to contribute troops to the UN force as have Italy and New Zealand. It is a pity that Britain's role

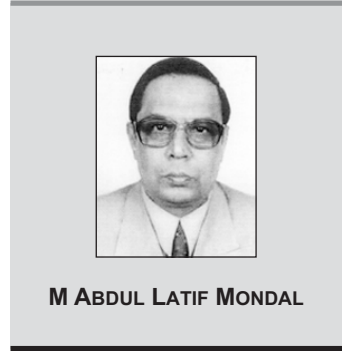
under Tony Blair has been totally sidelined.

The Security Council resolution is a compromise between the approaches of the US and France. France wanted Israeli withdrawal first and the US wanted Israeli withdrawal linked to a political settlement. These two approaches were feebly combined in the resolution. There lies the difficulty of ending the war permanently between Hezbollah and Israel.

Another fact is that Hezbollah commands loyalty from Shi'ites because it provides them with the basic daily necessities that the state does not provide them. Iran might be providing arms to Hezbollah but so also the US provides arms to Israel. One journalist wrote recently that: "Hezbollah is everywhere and nowhere" and Israel cannot hope to remove the movement that Hezbollah represents.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

# Why not a constitutional council?



M ABDUL LATIF MONDAL

THE constitution of Bangladesh has not made any provision for constituting any body/bodies to recommend appointments to the constitutional bodies like the Election Commission (EC) and the Public Service Commission (PSC), as well as to the higher judiciary. As a result, appointments to these bodies/institutions depend upon the wish of the prime minister who has been vested with the executive power of the republic.

Through such appointments require approval of the president, but that is a mere formality, because, the president is under constitutional obligation to act in accordance with the advice of the prime minister in the exercise of all his functions, save only that of appointing the prime minister and the chief justice.

The politicisation of appointments in these constitutional bodies/national institutions to satisfy the desire of the party/alliance in power in the past fifteen years' successive rule of the BNP and the AL has adversely affected the national interest.

Analysts and observers are, however, of the opinion that the politicisation of appointments in these bodies has been all time high during the past four plus years of the BNP-led alliance rule. A passing reference shows that appointment of the ruling BNP henchmen as the chief election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners (ECs), ignoring the opposition coalition demand for making appointments to these posts in consultation with the opposition political parties has created a serious crisis towards holding the next general election scheduled to be held in January 2007. The main opposition AL-led coalition has already declared that they will not participate in the general election held under the incumbent CEC and ECs. They have so far refrained from participating in any by-election held under the present EC.

Similarly, appointment of ruling alliance loyalists as chairman and members of the PSC has influenced

## BARE FACTS

Experiences of the last three decades or so of the independent Bangladesh show that time has come to make provision for the Constitutional Council, following the Sri Lankan model to the extent possible, in the constitution to regulate appointments to the constitutional bodies, higher judiciary and quasi-judicial bodies like Anti-Corruption Commission, Tax Ombudsman to protect them from politicisation by the party/alliance in power from time to time to serve their narrow political interests.

recruitment of activists and supporters of the ruling alliance depriving meritorious candidates. The much-talked-about recruitment of 150 or so activists of the JSD, the student wing of the ruling BNP, as upazila election officers last year is a case in point.

Furthermore, in the absence of constitutional requirement to consult the chief justice to appoint judges in any of the two divisions of the Supreme Court as well as non-existence of an independent body to recommend appointment of persons as additional judges to the High Court Division, their confirmation as judges to the High Court Division, and to recommend appointment of High Court Division judges as Judges to the Appellate Division, the appointment of judges in the higher judiciary is at the pleasure of the executive.

This has led to the continuous allegations of appointment of judges in the higher judiciary on political consideration. Not that the allegations are totally baseless. The much-talked-about appointment of 19 additional judges to the High Court Division in the latter half of 2004 on political consideration and resented by the Supreme Court Bar Association is a case in point.

Now the question is: how to stop politicisation of appointments to the constitutional bodies and/or national institutions?

In some countries, constitutions have provided for Constitutional Council to recommend appointments to the constitutional bodies. In some countries, appointments to such bodies/institutions are routed through parliament on the recommendation of a broad based committee.

In a landmark vote, the Sri Lankan parliament passed a bill on September 25, 2001 by a two-thirds majority to amend the constitution to administer police, judiciary, public service and elections. This 17th amendment has provided for Constitutional Council (CC) consisting of the prime minister, the speaker, leader of the opposition in parliament, one person appointed by the president, five persons appointed by the president, on the

nominations of both the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, one person nominated by the majority of the members of parliament belonging to political parties or independent groups other than the respective political parties or independent groups to which the prime minister or the leader of the opposition belong. The speaker is the chairman of the CC.

The CC recommends to the president appointments as chairmen and members of commissions, namely: (a) The Election Commission, (b) The Public Service Commission, (c) The National Police Commission, (d) The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, (e) The Permanent Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption, (f) The Finance Commission, and (g) The Delimitation Commission.

No person shall be appointed by the president to certain offices, unless such appointment has been approved by the CC upon a recommendation made to the CC by the president. The offices are: (a) the chief justice and other judges of the Supreme Court, (b) the president and other judges of the Court of Appeal, (c) the members of the Judicial Council other than the chairman, (d) the attorney general, (e) the auditor general, (f) the inspector general of police, (g) the parliamentary commissioner for administration (ombudsman), and (h) the secretary general of parliament.

The 1990 constitution of Nepal is the product of people's struggle against the autocracy of King Birendra for democracy. King Birendra, who was slain in a palace intrigue, was succeeded by King Gyanendra. King Gyanendra, who dismissed the elected government and seized absolute power by dissolving parliament, had to submit to the people's power to restore democracy and parliament. The parliament has already started clipping the wings of the king to be reflected in the new constitution to be framed by the constituent assembly. Anyhow, the 1990 constitution, hurt by King Gyanendra,

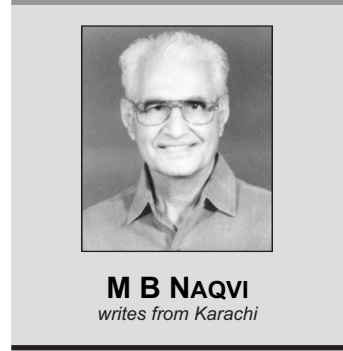
provides for a Constitutional Council (CC) to recommend appointments to the constitutional bodies. The prime minister heads the CC and the chief justice, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the chairman of the National Assembly and the leader of the opposition are members of the CC. For the purpose of appointing the chief justice, the CC shall include among its members the minister of justice and a judge of the Supreme Court.

The constitution of France provides for a nine-member Constitutional Council (CC) comprising the nominees of the president of the republic, nominees of the president of the National Assembly, nominees of the president of the Senate, and ex-presidents of the republic as ex-officio members, to discharge the functions and responsibilities that relate to ensuring: (a) regularity in the election to the office of the president of the republic, (b) regularity in the election of the deputies and the senators, and (c) regularity of referendums and proclamation of the results there of.

Experiences of the last three decades or so of the independent Bangladesh show that time has come to make provision for the Constitutional Council, following the Sri Lankan model to the extent possible, in the constitution to regulate appointments to the constitutional bodies, higher judiciary and quasi-judicial bodies like Anti-Corruption Commission, Tax Ombudsman to protect them from politicisation by the party/alliance in power from time to time to serve their narrow political interests.

M. Abdul Latif Mondal is a former Secretary to the Government.

# A perspective on Indian politics



M B NAQVI  
writes from Karachi

MOST Pakistanis, not to say Islamabad, are exercised over the wrench thrown into the Peace Process by Indian government to freeze the slow process. They cannot account for it. Why did India do it?

There is no short or straight answer except to analyse what is happening in India. To begin with, Indian authorities are not novices; they knew that Pakistan government at this stage could not have winked at Mumbai bombings. The recent expelling of an Indian diplomat shows several things: among them the long-running war between the intelligence agencies of the two countries.

Both governments know that each country posts spooks in its embassies; a calibrated tolerance is usual. Some think that in this case the decision may be deliberate; may be a signal to India about the frustration over India's perceived lack of interest in solving outstanding problems. However it is a reversion to the cold war between the two countries. This underlines the basic antagonism in the relationship between the two longstanding rivals. It is saddening. Were the two grandstanding by their recent PR moves for the benefit of outside world?

The specific reason for freezing the Process may be that New Delhi is unable to move further because of political troubles. The Manmohan Singh government today is under siege. It is being pulled from right and left. Manmohan Singh himself was thought to be the head of pro-American lobby inside the Congress and is not just a figurehead; he may be politically a relative lightweight as Congress leaders go, but he is no pushover. But he is not merely a PM but is supported strongly by the pro-American lobby and the Americans have done so much to strengthen his position.

Actually the Indian polity, or call it the Indian middle class, is fundamentally divided. The rise of the

## PLAIN WORDS

But there is another and harder Left that is seldom mentioned. These are Maoists or Nexalites. There are three or four groups of them. While their violent methods are not about to paint all of India red, they are a force to reckon with -- at least in the future. As of now, they have created a distinctive Red Corridor from north Bihar to Andhra Pradesh; 150 out of 600 districts fall into this Corridor.

Hindutva-supporting parties presented the end of Nehru era. It was a radical change. India became divided between the left forces, on the one side, and the rightwing forces, on the other. Over the years the rightwing forces have consolidated. The rightwing alliance of major social and political forces comprise the big business, India's largely bureaucracy-led Industrial-Military Complex, and both these tend to support the Hindutva's parties. The Congress is itself divided between pro-American and anti-American lobbies. Anti-American lobby comprises those still wedded to Nehruvian ideas, especially non-alignment.

Leaving aside the trouble from the mild or parliamentary Left, there has been a near revolt against Manmohan Singh's Pakistan policy. Remember what he said about converting Siachen Glacier into a Mountain of Peace; he was to visit Pakistan to finalise a few agreements; and he had indicated some progress on Kashmir, probably reducing troops in, if not demilitarizing, the disputed state. First a defiant statement came from an Indian general; then opposition to troop reduction was articulated in the media as well as by some more military men. Then there was opposition to March 2006 Indo-American agreement on nuclear reactors from what is bureaucracy; it was strongly supported by the Right, including the corporate press and media. Manmohan Singh had to stop dead in his tracks.

The parliamentary Left sometimes impedes but does not really threaten to withdraw support. It is inhibited by the numbing fear of the Right rushing in the vacuum that may be created, by the collapse of UPA government. That is how Manmohan gets away with his pro-American policies. This Left is still too small: 61 in a House of 543. It has not yet an alternative to the Right.

Being small in numbers in the Parliament does not mean that its influence is small. On the contrary, a

lot of Congressmen, especially its still active workers, think the way the Left does. Where would anyone put Mani Shankar Aiyer or even Natwar Singh? Academia is full of Leftists and corporate press has not entirely got rid of all journalists thought to be Leftist-inclined. Leftist thinking is alive and is capable of kicking.

But there is another and harder Left that is seldom mentioned. These are Maoists or Nexalites. There are three or four groups of them. While their violent methods are not about to paint all of India red, they are a force to reckon with -- at least in the future. As of now, they have created a distinctive Red Corridor from north Bihar to Andhra Pradesh; 150 out of 600 districts fall into this Corridor. While it would be foolish to disregard their potential, no one should forget that they have yet to defeat the Indian Army of a million well-armed men. That will be no joke. Anyway much of the drama lies in future. For the present, it can be noted that the Indian state has not been able to contain their army to do the job, no early success is to be expected. Still, this Left is not being taken into account by most Indians.

In recent years Indian governments have gone headlong into the American camp. That was indicated by India's vote on Iran in IAEA, the way Manmohan Singh pushed out Kunwar Natwar Singh and virtually demoted Mani Shanker Aiyer, despite these two being close to Nehru family in the past. But even this government is now under attack from the Right, although Congress' own rightwing is authentic Right. India's Right behaves as if it is a big force, for Big Money is with it. It now appears that Indian bureaucratic apparatus, especially its nuclear and military establishment, can also assert itself, strengthening the Right. In short, the Right can thwart India's vaunted democracy.

The political future of Manmohan Singh government will be determined not only in the contest between the Left and the Right

wings but also by caste-based parties. The future roles of BSP, Laloo Prashad Yadav's and Mulayam Singh Yadav's parties would be crucial for the future of populous Hindi-Hindu belt. Nothing can be said about the ultimate shape of things except that an element of uncertainty is woven into these caste-based parties: they now tend to favour leftwing rhetoric, especially on the communal question. But they can as easily help a rightwing government, as some supported the Vajpayee government.

Today, the divisions inside the Congress matter and they bode ill for its own future. It used to be a broad church under which there was always left- and right-wings. But the top political leadership somehow kept the two in harness. Now the top means who? There are three groups represented by Sonia Gandhi's Nehru loyalists, Arjun Singh and his friends, and other right wingers like the home minister and his friends.

There is another difficulty for it: The major share of support from the big business goes to Hindutva parties, Congress may be impoverished. Perhaps it will eventually split. No firm policies vis-a-vis Pakistan can be expected from this Indian government; it will probably vacillate between being friends and lurching into hostility. But there is a slight ray of light in the gloom: India needs Pakistan as a whipping boy who is needed to be demonised and blamed for India's many problems. That means Pakistan's longer-term security.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

## JANMASHTAMI

# Hindu philosophy and Lord Krishna

PREM RANJAN DEV

THE Hindu culture and tradition does not derive from any one prophet or founder. It has neither a uniform creed nor any organised church. The Vedas, which are the scriptures of the Hindus, are unique in character. We find in the Vedas a great variety of subjects and a great flexibility of doctrines.

Another ancient work of profound philosophic value is Bhagavad Gita, the song celestial, as it has been called. It forms a part of the great epic Mahabharata. The Gita attempted to bring about a synthesis of the existing Upanisads of the time. This book has attracted the interest of the philosophers as much as have the aphorisms of the Vedanta. Almost all of the great Vedantists have some commentary on this little book of seven hundred stanzas.

Apart from the Vedanta philosophy, there exist other systems of thought, such as Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya. These systems of thought are not in any sense in serious disagreement with the Vedanta. An

attempt has been made to bring about a synthesis of all systems of thought by the Puranas, literally, ancient truths. They are semi-philosophical works. There are eighteen of them, attributed by tradition to one person, Vyasa. The most outstanding of these Puranas is the Srimad Bhagavata which itself is considered as a commentary of the Vedanta. In this book have been fused all the great systems of Hindu philosophic thought with wonderful genius and skill. Those who are especially influenced by this book commonly go by the name Vaisnav.

Everybody knows that there is no single human authority accepted by all the Hindus nor has there been any movement to create such a central authority. There is also no ecclesiastical or hierarchical binding authority in Hinduism. In spite of all the above considerations, there is a definite body of knowledge and common themes that can be clearly identified as Hinduism. The risis or Vedic seers function as a binding force. Authority resides in the risis, and there are several of them. Rather than vie for a

complete monopoly on wisdom, these risis respect one another and work collaboratively. Rishihood in Hinduism is knowledge-based, and such knowledge can be cultivated. But methods of science and logic may be applied here. This knowledge is progressive and dynamic capable of continuous development. The risis can also cultivate supernatural faculties and are very important in Hindu tradition.

Festivals, ceremonies and rituals are integrating and uniting force in the Hindu tradition, pilgrimages and temples play the same role. There is a huge literature of stories, mythologies and legends that affect the imaginative man. There is also integration at the conceptual level. At this level, many systems of philosophy are developed. The classical philosophies like Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta come under this category. Again, there is no conflict over holding the single, universal truth. Rather, each system is recognised and respected by the others.

Hinduism encompasses an entire civilisation and way of life that has evolved since the dawn of human civilisation. The Vedas, the Upanisads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata play an important role in the development and practice of Hinduism. These, the ancient holy scriptures of the world, uphold the very truth of the eternal existence of the supreme Lord Sri Krishna. "Owing to the eternal will to communicate God descends on earth to re-unite. His joyful Self with His created beings". Essentially God manifests Himself in human form to crush and annihilate worldly vices and revive eternal values. Lord Krishna has bound Himself to man and in that consists the greatest glory of human existences. He came down with His full divine manifestations and raised human civilisation to a celestial plane. Thus came Sri Gauranga and brought a heavenly unification of mankind irrespective of caste, creed and races. The Bhakti movement of that time, espousing whole hearted devotion to God in one aspect or

another, opened up what was previously esoteric knowledge and practice for large numbers of peoples. Means were made available for everyone to realise God, with no conflict between knowledge and practice.

Sri Krishna focused on the unity of religions. His Gita is a deep reservoir of knowledge. There is also a wide range of spiritual disciplines and practice, such as Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and Tantra. These disciplines are significant to Hindus as well as practical and beneficial to all of humanity. The meanings and intention of the Gita have historically found elaboration and explication in the Smritis, the two great epics and various major and minor Puranas. Sri Krishna attracts all beings towards Himself so that they may realise the depth of His infinite mercy and love. He maintains as existence of concrete bliss. The entity of the creatures of the cosmos is part and parcel of Lord Krishna. There is a chronological order in the manifestation of the supreme Being.

Modern civilisation is now in a state of transition. If we are to survive, there must a moral and spiritual revolution which should embrace the whole of the world. In this context, a penetrating thought and look into the totality of Lord Krishna can save the cosmic existence and sanctify the coming world. Philosophy of Sri Krishna can contribute so much to life and its fulfillment not only for the Hindu community, but for all of the emerging world community. Hindu ancient wisdom continues to be a catalytic force in the philosophic transformation of the universe.

All gods and goddesses are translations of Brahma. Krishna is the most perfect translation of pure Brahma in the human experience. We can talk about Krishna, meditate on Krishna, love Krishna and dedicate our lives to Him. In this universe nothing and no person parallels Krishna. We living beings possess a mortal body and an immortal soul, but Krishna's body and soul both are immortal. He is the embodiment of bliss and love.



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