

# Hizbollah defiance of Israel emboldens US foes

REUTERS, Beirut

By surviving a ferocious month-long conflict with Israel, Hizbollah has foiled US-Israeli hopes of destroying the Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim group and emboldened its allies in Iran and Syria.

The day after a tenuous UN truce took hold in Lebanon, Iran and Syria made rhetorical hay from the outcome of the war.

Senior Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami called it a "disgraceful defeat" for the United States and Israel, and said Iran would fire missiles at Tel Aviv if it came under attack.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said Hizbollah's resistance to the Israeli onslaught would make the Jewish state think twice before pursuing "terrorist policies" in the region.

Both struck a note of clear defiance, the day after US President George W Bush portrayed the Lebanon conflict as "part of a broader struggle between freedom and terror".

In a trial of strength between the allies of the United States and Iran, Israel failed to dismantle or disarm Hizbollah, or even to push it beyond the Litani River, about 20 km (13 miles) from the border, despite an intense bombing campaign.

Israel says it killed about 530 guerrillas -- Hizbollah admits losing only 80 dead -- and destroyed

many rocket launchers. But it did not stop rocket fire on northern Israel or force Hizbollah to free the two soldiers it seized on July 12, even though the Israeli army suffered 117 dead and 450 wounded.

"This has exposed Israel's weakness," said Mustafa Alani, a security analyst at Dubai's Gulf Research Centre. "For all its military might, it lacks the capability to sustain a conflict of this kind. In that sense, Hizbollah's strategy succeeded."

If it was a military setback for Israel, it was a resounding political defeat for the Bush administration, Alani argued.

"It has shown that Iranian intervention is producing results in Lebanon as well as in Iraq," he said. "The message is that pressuring Iran will not be easy. If it is attacked or placed under UN sanctions, it can make things costly for others."

Shi'ite Iran has vowed to expand its nuclear fuel work despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding that the Islamic Republic desist by August 31 or face possible sanctions.

**MILITARY STALEMATE**  
Oussama Safa, of the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies, said that while the Lebanon war had dented Israel's morale and military image, Hizbollah rockets had also failed to deter Israel and the threat they posed was now a known quantity.

But he said Israel's failure to

uproot Hizbollah had raised questions about its value as a US strategic ally. "The Iranians have badly rattled the Israelis' cage," he added.

Hizbollah may have won plaudits in Tehran and Damascus, but it must also translate its battlefield endurance into gains at home, where many Christians, Sunni Muslims and Druze were aghast at Lebanon being dragged into a devastating war.

"Now the challenge is the extent of agreement on the implementation of (Security Council resolution) 1701," said Christian legislator and political scientist Farid al-Khazen.

The resolution calls for the Lebanese army and an expanded UN peacekeeping force to deploy south of the Litani as Israeli forces withdraw. Hizbollah is to have no armed presence there.

Hizbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has declared his fighters will cooperate with the UN and Lebanese deployment, but sharply rebuffed any idea that they will disarm.

"Hizbollah's plan is for the fighters and weapons to be invisible, in standby mode," said Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, a Lebanese expert on the group. "This is not equivalent to disarmament."

Turning a blind eye to Hizbollah's hidden weapons may not suit Israel, the United States or the European nations expected to lead the bigger UN troop mission.

But the last month has proved that no one can disarm the group by force.

The weak Beirut government, hostage to Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system, may be willing to fudge the issue to preserve a facade of unity, and to defer debating Hizbollah's arms pending a wider deal that would hinge on Israel quitting the disputed Shebaa Farms border area, which Lebanon claims.

That would remove one of Hizbollah's main reasons for still fighting Israel six years after it withdrew from Lebanon.

If the truce turns into a UN-monitored ceasefire, Israeli and Hizbollah forces will no longer be eyeball to eyeball across the border, reducing the chance of another flare-up.

Safa said the magnitude of war destruction meant Hizbollah would have to act carefully to maintain internal support and consensus in a Lebanese polity of which it is now an integral part, with two cabinet ministers and 14 members of parliament.

But Nasrallah will brook no talk of disarmament, arguing in a speech on Monday night that Hizbollah was far abler than the Lebanese army to resist Israel and that it was "immoral" to raise the issue now and risk arousing Shi'ite wrath.



Principal Kazi Faruq Ahmed speaks at a discussion on 'Economic condition of private educational institutes: Depositing student fees to government exchequer' at National Press Club in the city yesterday. National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFT) organised the discussion.

PHOTO: STAR

## Two power sub-stations inaugurated in Natore

BSS, Natore

Two newly constructed sub-stations of Bangladesh Power Development Board have been installed here at a cost of Tk 10 crore.

Deputy Minister for Land M Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu formally inaugurated the sub-stations on the premises of the Power Development Board at Alaipur.

The two sub-stations have been built at Alaipur and Baro-Harishpur under the Greater Rajshahi Power Development Project to ensure smooth supply of electricity in Natore city.

Installation of 124 kilometres of electricity supply lines, among other things, is also going under the Tk 30-crore project.

DC Tahosinur Rahman, SP Golam Kibria, Chairman of Natore Poursabha Kazi Shah Alam and four officials of PDB were present at the inaugural function.

## RU teacher narrowly escapes attempt on life

RU CORRESPONDENT

A Rajshahi University (RU) teacher narrowly escaped an attempt on his life on Tuesday night.

Prof Faridul Islam of marketing department yesterday filed a general diary with Boalia Police Station and sought security of his life. Seven armed terrorists chased Prof Farid at the city's Upashahar areas at around 10:00pm while he was returning home from RU Juberi Bhaban. Later, locals of Assam Colony rescued him.

He suspected the attempt might have relations with the students' agitation programmes protesting 'illegal' recruitment of eight teachers against two advertised posts in the department.

At around 9:45pm, Farid started for home by a rickshaw from RU Kajla gate. As he suspected that somebody was following him, he took his student Abdul Alim Babu with him.

Minutes later, they noticed that five miscreants in two motorcycles had taken position near Sericulture Training Institute barricading their road.

Sensing danger, his student

asked him to run and at a stage, they jumped into a pond. Later they took shelter at a house at the other end of the pond, Farid narrated before police.

RU proctor, student advisor and other officials rushed to the spot and escorted him to home.

While speaking with the newsmen, Prof Farid said that somebody was threatening him and his family members over phone for several days.

He informed the matter to RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain, Registrar Prof Abdus Salam and Proctor Enamul Haque and demanded security.

He said that a candidate who was not appointed as a teacher gave death threats to other teachers of the department. The teachers who received death threats are Prof Golam Rabbani Mondol, Nuruzzaman, Rafiq Azad and Rabiul Islam.

Another threat recipient teacher Nuruzzaman said, they suspect that they are receiving threats as they instigated student movement against controversial candidates.

Teachers of marketing department called an emergency academic committee meeting today over repeated threats by terrorists while students of the department will launch fresh movements against controversial candidates.

## Applications for scholarships invited

Bangladesh Scholarship Council (BSC) invites applications for its 12th scholarship programme at the university level throughout the country for the year 2006-2007, says a press release.

Under the programme, a total of 300 scholarships will be distributed at Taka 12,000 each. The majors include medicine, agriculture, engineering, science & technology, commerce and humanities (specified fields only).

Candidates should apply with full bio-data clearly mentioning present educational status, two passport size attested photos, copies of previous and current attested mark-sheets, a recommendation letter from the head of the department and parent's yearly income statement through proper authority.

Applicants receiving other financial grants are not eligible to apply. A fresh application is required for renewal and must indicate "Renewal". Application from can be down loaded from bscbd.org.

Prospective applications should be sent to Secretary, Bangladesh Scholarship Council (BSC), 288, MM Ali Road, 2F Wasa More, Chittagong-4000 on or before September 20, 2006 by mail.

REUTERS, New Delhi

Sonal Agarwal says her disfigured face is a constant reminder of the most terrifying night of her life -- her wedding night.

"My husband just went crazy. He said he wanted to kill me and lashed out at me with a knife and cut my face," said Sonal, tugging a blue scarf covering her head to hide slash wounds on her left cheek.

The 22-year-old student from Chandigarh thought she was heading for a prosperous new life in the West with a British-born Indian doctor after he chose her from scores of women who replied to his advert seeking a bride.

But after leaving her family and homeland to live in the UK, Sonal found her new husband was a fraud.

"He was mentally sick and wasn't a doctor and didn't have a job. His family tricked me and now my life is finished," she said.

Women's groups say every year hundreds of stary-eyed girls seeking a better life in the West are duped into wedlock by men of Indian origin living in the diaspora -- in countries like the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia -- mostly for money.

"Thousands of Indian men in the West come here and advertise in matrimonial every year," said Yogesh Mehta from the National Commission for Women, a govern-

ment body for women's rights.

"While many are honest about who they are, there are also a lot who lie about their jobs, economic and marital status often to get the dowry," he added.

Dowries -- often jewellery, expensive clothing, motorcars and money -- are given by the bride's family to the groom and his parents, traditionally to ensure the bride will be comfortable in her new home.

The custom, outlawed in India more than four decades ago but still widely practiced, is often exploited with the groom's family demanding more money in return for not abusing the bride.

**"CHEAT" MARRIAGES**

Women's groups say the number of women marrying men of Indian origin living overseas or Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) is rising proportionately as the Indian population overseas increases.

Consequently, there are an increasing number of complaints from women who are victims of fraud or "cheat" marriages.

"Everyday we get around three complaints just to our ministry alone from women who are victims of these marriages," said one official from the ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

"It's a serious issue which needs to be tackled as some of the stories of what happens to these girls can be quite shocking," the official added.

Very often the women go abroad after the wedding only to find themselves abandoned with no-one turn to, no money, no ability to speak the local language and no knowledge of the norms and customs of the alien country.

Other women tell tales of being battered or kept prisoner in the home and treated like domestic workers. Some even find their new husband is already married to someone else.

There are also cases of "holiday brides" -- women abandoned in India within days or weeks of marriage with the husband promising to return once visa arrangements have been made for his wife, but never actually doing so.

There are no accurate numbers on how many cheat marriages take place, but some reports say Punjab, which has a large community overseas, has so far registered 15,000 cases alone.

Other states like Gujarat and Kerala have also seen cases.

But activists say the number of deceived brides is under-reported with many unwilling to speak out, fearing the shame and stigma associated with being a divorced or separated woman in traditional Indian society.

**GREENER PASTURES**

In many parts of India, a match for their daughter with an Indian living abroad is coveted by parents lured by the prospect of greener

pastures for the entire family.

Eager not to let go of such lucrative offers, the families often ignore the common cautions that are observed in traditional Indian matchmaking.

"If a marriage proposal comes from a man in India, then checks are made about him and his family through mutual acquaintances and other ways," said Sneha Singh, a social worker and victim of a fraud marriage to an Indian living abroad.

"But when it's an NRI no one bothers to check anything because he is from the West so he is thought to be rich and respectable."

Activists say social awareness campaigns must be held advising families to check a groom's background -- perhaps through his voter registration card, social security number, employment record and tax returns -- which would show his true status.

They also argue legislation must be reviewed as even those brides brave enough to seek justice get entangled in a web of legal complexities due to the different laws pertaining to marriage in India and the country where the NRI husband is from.

India must also make it compulsory for marriages to be registered which will give more legal protection to the duped bride, women's groups add.

## All work, no play for India's army of toiling children

REUTERS, Kolkata

Subhankar Baidya can't bring himself to discuss his ordeal as an abused domestic servant. Instead, the five-year-old boy draws pictures to show the beatings and humiliations he endured until his rescue.

"I don't want to get beaten up again and wipe floors," said the traumatised boy, rescued by social workers from a suburban Kolkata house in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal a few weeks ago following complaints from neighbours of mistreatment.

"I want to play," he said. Baidya's fate is typical of millions of Indian children under 14 who are employed to clean homes and run errands, or slog away in restaurants, tea stalls and at holiday resorts for a pittance.

The Indian government says it is determined to put a stop to these tales of misery.

Earlier this month, the Labour Ministry said it would toughen and extend child labour laws -- first passed in 1986 to outlaw the use of children under 14 in dangerous factories -- to punish those caught employing kids in jobs like Subhankar's.

Under the new rules, which come into effect in October, children under the age of 14 will be banned from working as domestic servants or at hotels, tea shops, restaurants and resorts.

Offenders face a jail term of up to two years and a maximum fine of 20,000 rupees (227 pounds).

While welcoming the move, sociologists and officials fear the

ban will have little effect without a concrete plan to provide for children often forced into the workforce by extreme poverty.

"Children still risk their lives in dangerous jobs and unless you implement any rule it looks great only on paper," said Swapan Pramanik, sociologist and vice-chancellor of the Vidyasagar University in Kolkata.

The government says there are more than 11 million child labourers in India.

Rights groups put the figure closer to 60 million, with many still working in hazardous industries such as fireworks and glass factories, despite the 1986 government ban and Supreme Court orders demanding better enforcement.

Child labourers also work on farms, at carpet weaving factories or in textile plants -- where their supple hands and nimble fingers are better suited to the often intricate work.

**TWO WORLDS IN ONE**

In Mumbai, India's bustling capital of films and finance, more than 50,000 children work in gold-polishing and leather-stitching factories, in stark contrast to kids from rich families who pack amusement parks on weekends.

But much of the country's demand for child labour is met by the eastern states of West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand where grinding rural poverty give parents little choice but to send their children out to work.

Under a 1996 court order, state governments are supposed to pay compensation of 10,000 rupees when they remove a child from a

job. But activists say this rule has not provided a long-term solution.

"Monetary assistance of a few thousand rupees is no use as parents send their children back to work," said Jogesh Chattopadhyay, a top police official.

To avoid police action, activists say, those employing children produce fake birth certificates claiming the children are older than their real ages.

"During a recent study on the West Bengal jute industry we found 2,000 underage children were slogging in the mills but on paper they were all adults," said Swapan Mukherjee, secretary of Free the Children-India, an international children's rights group operating in 34 countries.

State governments are often lax about investigating abuses, activists say.

**KITE FLYING?**

Qutubuddin Ali, aged 11, says he loves to fly kites but has to spend more than 12 hours a day working at an unlicensed shoe factory in a house in Bamungachi, 35 km (20 miles), north of Kolkata, West Bengal's capital.

"I am the sole bread winner in the family," Ali, clad in torn shorts, said as he wiped eyes teary from poisonous fumes. He earns about 200 rupees or around \$4 per month.

Mohammed Ilyas, a year older than Ali, cycles for an hour each morning to a factory where his job is to stitch leather.

"My father beats me and sends me back when I say no," he said as he munched on a biscuit, his lunch for the day.