

A Council for Global Economy

The proposal for the creation of an Economic Security Council made by Jacques Delors, president of the European Community (EC) Commission last Sunday, merits careful consideration by a cross-section of developed and developing nations. The basic idea is to link the proposed council to the United Nations to monitor the world economy, to evaluate the work of various development-oriented agencies and to respond to the "challenge of interdependence," especially in the field of disparities and conflict of interests.

The proposal comes from an eminently qualified person. Apart from holding the highest position in EC, Delors is being considered as a strong potential candidate for the French presidential election in 1995.

The EC commission official who would like his proposal taken up at a special summit meeting in October has suggested that the proposed council should be as representative of different continents as possible. However, the composition of the body, like its terms of reference, remains a matter of detailed deliberation at the October summit—and later.

Delors speaks with growing disenchantment, widely shared by the international community, about the global economic situation. Most of the UN agencies concerned with trade and development are hardly moving forward, with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in despair over the ever-changing deadline for the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. The usefulness of UNCTAD is questioned, while the two giants in development, the World Bank and the IMF face increasing pressure on their resources.

Delors uses unusually strong expressions to vent his despair. He has rightly called the last summit of the seven industrialised nations as a "mountain that gave birth to a mouse", and he finds the EC as a "house in danger."

True, the immediate concern of the French expert may well be with problems facing the West, from the volatile currency situation to growing unemployment, from the aid to Russia to the US-EC differences. However, Delors, a socialist, puts considerable emphasis on the need for creating a framework for removing disparities between the developing nations and the affluent West.

The challenge facing the proposed council is to find ways of making it as effective as possible, capable of responding to the global needs. However, being autonomous in their operation, the UN agencies may not like their independence to be curbed. In the end, it may well mean that coordination among the agencies and evaluation of their activities at the proposed council or in any mechanism set up for the purpose could turn out to just another annual ritual. This would be counter-productive, surely not exactly what the EC Commission President has in mind.

To avoid undue disappointment caused by a possible failure of what is undoubtedly a forward-looking proposal, it is important that careful planning and hard thinking are done to work out the details, based on consultations with nations, UN agencies and experts from outside the world body. The UN Secretary General, Dr Boutros Ghali whose own development priorities seem a little hazy—or perhaps overshadowed by his political concerns—must indeed take a major role in giving the proposal from Delors the thrust it needs, not to mention of the endorsement from the world body it requires. The UN has some good experts to start working on the idea, without losing time. Herein lies a test for the credibility of the UN—especially of the Secretary General—on the all-important question of development on a global basis.

Drive against Illegal Manufacturers

Two illegal factories producing adulterated ghee and glucose have been unearthed by the police in Keraniganj and Jimra. In Rajshahi also, the police came up in their drive with a similar factory that had been producing adulterated mustard oil. The successive days—Thursday and Friday—drives by the police appear to be a part of a campaign against illegal manufacturing business in the country. According to one of the factory owners' own admission, he has been in the illegal practice for the past year. About the other two's operation period, the reports say nothing.

The successful police drives—both in Dhaka and Rajshahi—almost at the same time may be a coincidence but there is no doubt more such illegal manufacturers elsewhere in the country are engaged in this clandestine business putting at risk the health of their products' consumers. The unsuspecting consumers can do little to save themselves from such marketing ills. Needless to say that such secret and illegal operations cannot be conducted for long without tacit support from the legal branches. The underground rings, however strong they may be, cannot dodge the law enforcers if the latter are serious and mindful to their job.

It is good news that the authority concerned has at last become alive to the situation but to break the stranglehold of the fake manufacturers it will need more than just an usual anti-illegal-manufacturing drive. If the agency responsible for curing the disease itself becomes contaminated, success of the drive is bound to be suspect. No question however about the ingenuity of the fake producers, they can produce the exact copy of almost anything—ranging from blades to heavy machines—imported from abroad.

As for the local companies, the sooner they get market for their products the greater the pressure for compromising the quality. One reason is the unfair imitation of the product by a number of other companies or outright illegal facsimile brands flooding the market. All this can happen only because there is not enough supervision at the appropriate level. An effective step towards bringing order in this commodity chaos would be to make the approval of the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI) mandatory for all manufacturers, which should then be ably complimented by regular supervision.

Our Students and Our Future : Are We Really Concerned?

We seem to have totally lost our cultural values under which teachers were accorded a position next only to parents. Even in Europe and America, where teacher-student relations do not carry the quality of veneration, teachers are accorded the respect that their noble profession demands.

THE recent incident at Jahangir Nagar University has reminded us, once again, about the crisis in our education system. The incident seems to be quite different from other instances of student indiscipline. No one would condone unruly behaviour by students or, for that matter, by any section of the community but one could perhaps take a more lenient view of a spontaneous fracas which developed in the heat of the moment. This was not, it seems, such a case. According to press reports, it was a case of pre-meditated and calculated assault on the teachers and other authorities of the University. A cold-blooded crime such as this cannot be brushed aside on any pretext. It clearly shows the depth to which some of our students are capable of descending. According to press reports they belong to the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal which, as the student wing of the ruling BNP, enjoys the patronage of the government. Quite apart from their party affiliation, one hesitates to refer to them as "students." Obviously they are not in the University for learning. No student worth the name would wear a mask and attack his teachers with deadly weapons.

We seem to have totally lost our cultural values under which teachers were accorded a position next only to parents. Even in Europe and America, where teacher-student relations do not carry the quality of veneration, teachers are accorded the respect that their noble profession demands. Over the years, it seems, our sensitivities have been blunted by the frequency of incidents in which teachers were assaulted by students. Is it not high time for us to pause and reflect on the whole issue? Which way are we heading? It is not, in my view, a matter of party politics. It is a symptom of a deep rooted and deadly malaise.

The Commission's mandate

AS the United States announced its decision to add a war-torn and bankrupt country like Sudan to its list of states sponsoring terrorism, analysts wondered whether there are any gains in it for Washington. They reckon that the move is a mere symbolic gesture and will be of little consequence to the economy of Sudan or to its relations with the world's only remaining superpower.

In fact there has never been trade of any substantial value between the two countries and Washington had already stopped all military and financial aid to Khartoum for almost a decade. The only aid received by any Sudanese government since the fall of President Gaafar al-Nimety in 1985 was humanitarian and as such will not be affected by this latest decision.

Even if Washington pursues further its decision, for example with trade sanctions, it will have little effect on Sudan. The regime of Gen. Omar Bashir is already economically and politically bankrupt. It has been isolated by the international community since 1990. This was emphasised in mid-August by the International Monetary Fund's decision to strike the country off its own lists.

The IMF's action has greater implications than the US decision as it automatically implies that no international bank or organisation will be allowed to provide Sudan with any financial facilities. As one diplomat in Washington put it: "It is so bad that it cannot go worse."

Why then take such a step against a country which has nothing to lose?

Observers in Washington believe that by punishing Khartoum, the Clinton Administration is in fact sending warning messages to Iran and the group of Iranian mullahs who are believed to back extremist organisations such as Islamic Jihad based in Lebanon or Hamas in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Some Arab affairs analysts in Washington are adamant

that the seriousness of the incident in the Jahangir Nagar University is not questioned by anyone. The appointment of a Commission of Enquiry under a Supreme Court judge is a clear indication of the gravity of the crisis. Yet there was no statement from the government on the issue expressing disapproval of the conduct of the students. Surely the BNP does not condone violence in campuses. If so, why the silence? It is because the students alleged to be involved in the incident are Chhatra Dal followers? The appointment of a one-man Commission of Enquiry was no doubt a good step but why limit the inquiry only to the eve of July 29 and why should the enquiry take three months and not three weeks? The event took place in broad daylight and presumably there are hundreds of witnesses. The people want to know the facts now and not at some future date. It was suggested to me that perhaps the patrons of the students hope that in three months' time the memory of the ugly event will fade from public mind. Perhaps it will, but my suspicion is that it is a mistaken belief. Public concern about violence and discipline in the educational institutions is not likely to diminish.

In fact, incidents such as the one in Savar will soon turn the parents' anxieties into despair. However cleverly one may manipulate the media and try to "manage" the fall-out of such an incident, neither the parents nor the general public can be fooled for too long. Their children are at risk. They want their sons and daughters to receive good education; they want neither to train them as hooligans nor to receive their dead malaise.

The Commission's mandate

is very limited; such an incident does not take place out of the blue. There must be a background. One must examine the circumstances under which such a barbaric attack could be launched against the teachers. However, despite the limited scope of the enquiry, the public will no doubt await with interest the report of the Commission. The learned judge will, I am confident, objectively bring out the facts of the case. Meanwhile, what about the criminal law in force in the country? I was told that one of the students has been taken to

ordinary people, irrespective of party affiliation, are deeply worried about the long-term implications of the incident.

The opposition parties have been complaining for quite sometime that the government is exercising its enormous powers under the anti-terrorism law against their workers and activists. The anti-terrorism law, it is being alleged, is frequently used for suppressing the opposition. There are reports of arrests and harassment of students and party workers if they are opposed to either the BNP or the Jamaat. It is difficult to

out bringing party politics into these basic administrative functions. In fact, crime in any form cannot be a part of politics of any party, be it in the government or in the opposition.

Students in developing countries and certainly in Bangladesh, have played a historic role in national emancipation. As the most conscious and idealistic section of the population the vast body of students have thrown themselves into such struggles without expectation of personal gain.

The Language Movement of 1952 is clearly an example of an occasion when the students stood up against alien conspiracies against the very existence of our national cultural and identity. Similarly, many students bravely joined the Liberation War and played a heroic role throughout the struggle. But these are not ordinary events. Participation in such events which transcend party politics is justified in the long term interest of the nation. The fight against the previous autocratic regime was another important national issue. The students acted as the vanguard of the struggling mass.

Our goal should be to try to find the real problems of our educational institutions. Is it terrorism? Is it the excessive influence of a few professional student activists? Is it the distribution of arms to the cadres? Is it the partisan choice of Vice-Chancellors and other senior officers of the institutions? To my mind, we are looking at an abyss; we can pull ourselves up and deal with the problem only if we wake up from the sort of collective myopia that we are suffering from. It will be sad indeed if our leaders continue to indulge in partisan manoeuvre when our whole future is at stake.

tories and Universities? Let us not fool ourselves. All this is not happening exactly spontaneously; the sources of support for the student activists is no secret. In consequence, other parties also feel that unless they fight back, they will suffer political disadvantage. The students, it is reasoned, are too important as pawns in the political chess game, for any party to surrender their use to the opponents only.

It is a truism to say that our future depends on our students. We all say this, regrettably, without any genuine conviction. If we really believed that the nation's fate hinges on the quality of education, on the level of discipline and competence of the new generation, we would not have allowed the kind of game that is going on. In that case, the government would have enlarged the scope of the Commission to determine the root cause of the rot that seems to have engulfed all the campuses. The opposition parties would also have extended full cooperation to these efforts. In fact, I sincerely hope that all the opposition parties will join in a national search for a solution to this problem. Our very future as a nation hinges on our ability to deal with this crisis.

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Sudanese recruits. The Iranian-trained soldiers were later sent to the south to fight the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

Furthermore, reports by organisations such as Amnesty International on human rights violation indicate that in order to guarantee its own survival, the regime was adopting methods of torture, harassment and preventive detention.

At the end of last year it became apparent that the Sudanese regime was desperately at the mercy of its Iranian paymasters, as intelligence reports from Sudan revealed the presence of Shia mullahs in mosques in Kordofan, in Port Sudan and even in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. Teheran was also allowed to set up an "Islamic" radio station in Port Sudan with broadcasts in Arabic to beamed to North Africa. As the Iranian presence in Sudan increased to the extent of allowing Iranian Shia Islam take over the Sunni precepts applied in Sudan for centuries, its neighbour Egypt became increasingly wary.

This added fuel to new reports reaching Cairo about the Sudanese plans of granting Iran naval military facilities north of Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The Saudi government panicked at the idea of having the Iranian navy a few miles from its maritime boundaries. The Egyptians threatened to bomb any military installation that its air force might locate in the Sudanese region of the Red Sea.

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ON THE RECORD

by Shah AMS Kibria

custody but what about the others? Have we suspended these laws in respect of these students? There was a press report that some students have filed a case against ten teachers. It would be interesting to know the nature of the allegations against the teachers. The teachers, according to a press report, held a rally at the Central Saheed Minar on 30 August to protest the alleged inaction of the authorities in taking proper steps against the students involved in the attack.

It will be a grave error, in my view, if the incident is considered in the party context. It is symptomatic of deep rooted problems and no party is immune to this virus. It not only tarnishes the image of the party which indulges in making use of armed student cadres for party interests but, what is far more important, it casts a dark shadow on our very future.

know the whole truth. Is the government moving against the opposition activists on genuine grounds of violence and terrorism or is it motivated by party interests? Is the police force and the administration being misused for partisan purposes? These questions need to be fully answered to restore the confidence of the people in the neutrality and objectivity of the government in dealing with the law and order issue. Their record up to now, regrettably, does not seem to be very reassuring.

Here was, however, a chance for the government to probe that it is indeed acting fairly and impartially in curbing violence in the educational institutions. Nothing would have restored the government's credibility more than decisive action to demonstrate that perpetrators of violence and crime will be dealt with under the law without fear or favour and with-

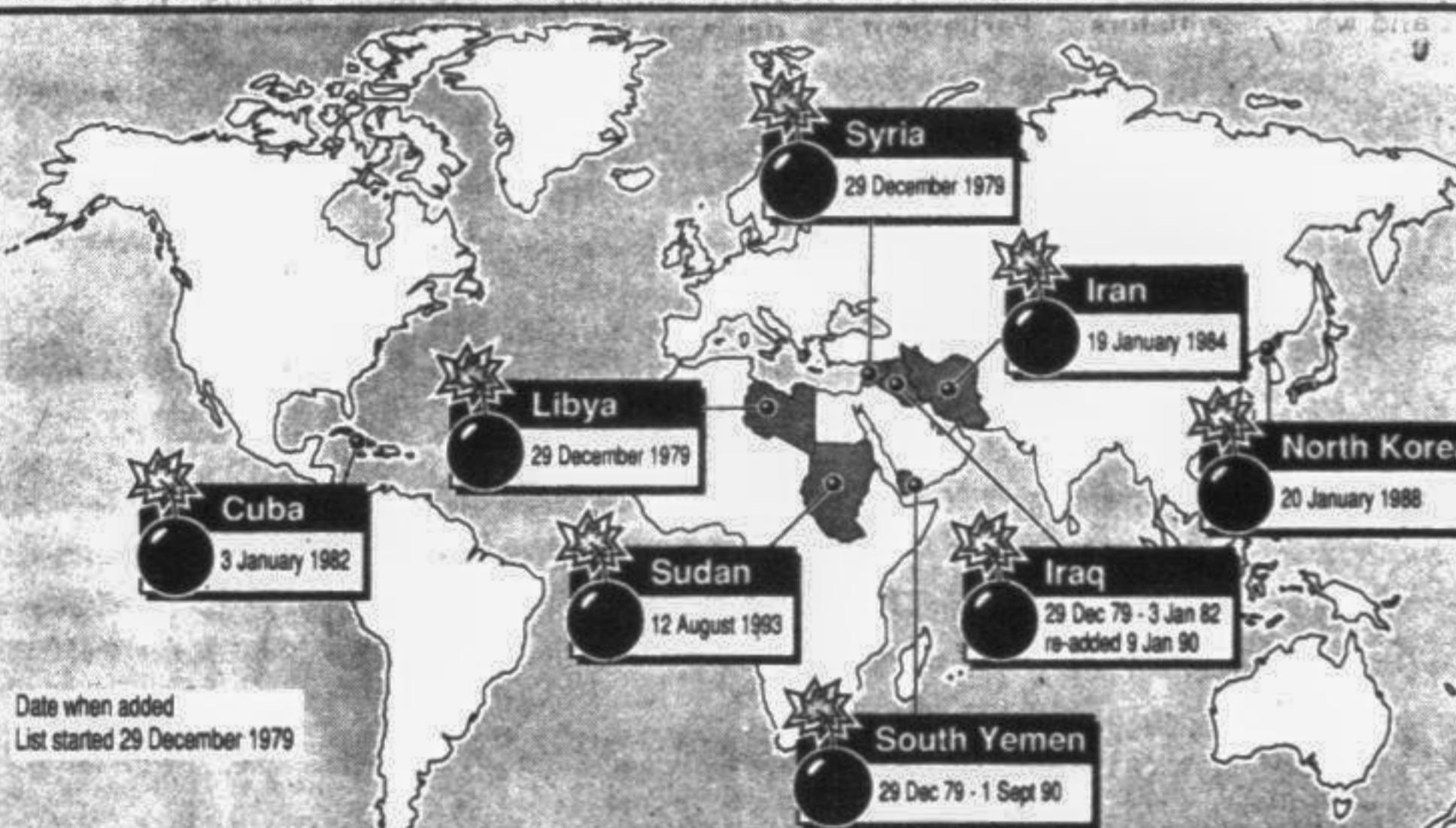
Why Sudan Action is a Signal to Tehran

by Eva Dadrian

The United States has added Sudan to the list of countries which it considers promote international terrorism. The action is likely to have little impact on the regime in Khartoum, already reeling under severe economic and political problems. For many years Washington had stopped all military and financial aid to Sudan. The real reason for the latest US action is to check the ambitions of Sudan's ally Iran.

Terror list

States considered by the US to be repeatedly providing 'support for acts of international terrorism'



that, through its influence on the Islamic movements in Egypt and in Sudan, Tehran has succeeded in increasingly diverting the West's attention from the Gulf to the Red Sea. Tehran has used Sudan as a corridor to channel its religious and ideological ambitions to Arab and African countries. By doing so it expects to erode Egypt's leading position in the region and to undermine Saudi Arabia's leadership of the Muslim world.

When in December 1991 President Hashemi Rafsanjani visited Khartoum with an entourage estimated to be made up of more than 200 clerics and officials, the die was cast and the Iranian revolutionary machinery started rolling in a country devastated by civil war. According to intelligence reports

from Khartoum and Cairo, by February 1992 some 2,000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards had joined the 1,000 Lebanese members of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia based in Khartoum.

Sudan was already harbour-

ing the extremist groups of Abu Nidal, Hamas and George Habash. The same reports were mentioning that while 1,500 of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were 'foot soldiers' the other 500 were highly trained officers who helped the Sudanese military regime to set up the Popular Defence Forces. Given full authority to conduct house searches, investigations and arrests, these units, modelled on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, number today more than 100,000 and are assigned the sole task of protecting the regime.

The Iranian influence on the Sudanese regime increased as Sudan, becoming more isolated from the Arab world, desperately needed oil and weapons to fight the war in the south. Reports from Iranian opposition groups in Paris revealed that Sudan was also receiving about \$20 million worth of weapons.

In exchange, the regime granted facilities for training camps for new recruits of Hezbollah and Hamas. These camps, situated around Khartoum and in Kordofan and Darfur in the Western region, were 'indoctrination' as well as 'military training' camps for

Islam in Africa.

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choice. The local governing bodies will be able to control and supervise the schools and the colleges. Local institutions may be allowed to grow, because there is no other better alternative to it. The government has already taken up an enormous responsibility, and its span of control has already been overextended. No central government of a country can bear such responsibilities as we have undertaken.

Now is the time for us to consolidate and strengthen our existing position. The government schools and colleges as of now do not have the laboratories, libraries and the playing fields worth the name. The existing ones are far below the required standards. The average budget allotment for the development of a college library would be about Taka twenty thousand per annum, an unbelievably low amount. The buildings of the old and established colleges like BM College and AM College are crumbling down. Our first priority should obviously be to save, preserve and extend the educational institutions that we already have.

For boys and girls coming from distant areas, there should be generous amounts of stipends in deserving cases, and ex-

tended hostel facilities, more particularly for the girls.

In several cases where we have upgraded a college to that of a University College, and also have opened up BA/B Sc honours courses and MA/MSc courses, there is already a severe shortage of qualified teachers which would take many years to be filled up. Besides we have to upgrade the qualifications of a large number of our teachers, and the UGC can play a pivotal role here.

The standards of our education have simply been shattered during the past several years, and this needs 'rehabilitation'.

We have to monitor and evaluate the progress, and the quality of education that is being imparted in colleges and schools that have been nationalised since 1980.

While making the above observations, we are fully aware of the fact that the development of education, knowledge, skills and technology (human resources development) can only lift us from our present state of poverty. In the face of our acute resource constraint, we would suggest that 20% of our revenue budget and ADP be committed to the education sector. Our development and achievements in all other sectors are dependent on it, and there is no better choice.

OPINION

Education and Community Participation

Shahabuddin Mahtab

We have now completed forty years after the partition of India and more than two