Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Saturday, September 26, 1998 The Other Saline

There is news from all around the devastated areas of spreading diarrhoea. This was universally known to occur in the wake of the recession of the flood waters. When government figures put the casualty at more than four lakh attacked and nearly 500 dead the true toll may already have been much more and the size and seriousness of the situation can be comprehended accordingly.

There, however, has been one good performance. Very satisfying and almost an achievement. Messages from all around are saying they have a surfeit of oral saline. What they need very badly is intravenous saline for acute cases. That there is no bad shortage of oral saline anywhere is great news in two ways. One, enough of this has been produced and are being produced. Two, this has been reached even to the remotest nooks and crannies of the country. This couldn't be without selfless and untiring work. Popular participation in both, augmenting the government efforts, has simply done wonders.

The dextrose or IV saline is a different matter. It cannot be made by popular initiative. The manufacturing pharmaceutical facilities, government, private or international, should be asked to maximise their production of this stuff, if necessary, curtailing other productions. The nation will be eager not to hear of any IV saline shortage anymore. For only through this a serious case of dehydration can be brought back to life. Lack of it means certain death for critically dehydrated persons. We cannot allow that to happen.

It is not possible to exaggerate the losses or the size of the challenge. But it is also wrong to declaim like the alarmist Jeremiah. The inadequacy of our collective responses — governmental or organisational in the shape of different agencies, party or NGO or sheer philanthropy-based — is largely made up by the truth that in each of our 120 million individual lives a diehard resistor. Our nation has come past eons of time not waiting for doles to descend from some benign central authority. The spirit in the man, a key factor, is constantly being kept out of the alarmist projections.

There is another disquieting news from the districts. Medical teams are tending to be stationary. Rather than moving out to the needy, the teams wait in their quarters expecting the afflicted to present themselves to them. This is not acceptable. This great disaster has occasioned so many acts of heroism by all and sundry, doctors being most numerous among them. For this unusual time let them exceed their capacity and become doorstep doctors.

Indo-Pak Thaw

On the sidelines of UNGA session but under considerable international focus sharpened by the goading of big powers, recently nuclearised India and Pakistan have agreed to sit for a dialogue to reduce strains in their relationship. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee in their second meeting since nuclear tests last May 'reaffirmed their belief that an environment of durable peace and security was in the supreme interest of India and Pakistan'. With that positive tenor set, their foreign secretaries rounded off the new-found bonhomie announcing that they would meet in Islamabad from October 15-18 to discuss outstanding issues in their bilateral relationship, including Kashmir.

This is quite a step forward from the inauspicious break-down of the meeting they held on the fringes of the Colombo SAARC summit. This floundered on the rocks of charges of intransigence traded by both sides. As if that was not enough, they subsequently exchanged artillery fire on the Kashmir border, the heaviest in recent memory.

The western powers have been pressuring both India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT and settle the thorny Kashmir question peacefully. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in his address to the UNGA session pledged to sign the global test ban treaty by September, 1999. At the same session Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said earlier on that his country won't sign the CTBT subject to withdrawal of sanctions.

In the western perception, signing the CTBT is regarded as the key to reducing tension between the two countries while Pakistan believes Kashmir is the core contention and India perceives the bilateral problems in a package and insists on a composite approach. The forthcoming Islamabad talks are expected to steer clear of conceptual differences and home in on the problems the world wants resolved peacefully at the earliest.

Why Rahims are So Few?

He could have easily gone home with the windfall. Nobody would have ever asked him anything about it. Instead, as a leading Bangla daily reported Thursday last, autorickshaw driver Abdur Rahim scootered from one end of the city to the other with the frenzy of a man possessed in order to find the passenger who had inadvertently dropped a bundle of Taka ten thousand while alighting the three wheeler. When Rahim found the money the man was gone. From Mohammadpur the driver rushed all the way to the newspaper office at Tikatully, deposited the money there and went out again in search of that missing owner of the unclaimed money. In the ambages of Mohammadpur at night it was very nearly the proverbial struggle for finding a lost needle in a haystack.

To the reward of his honesty and endeavour Rahim did find the owner and together sped back to the newspaper office on that very night. From a situation of no hope the owner got back his lost money. And the duty Rahim's own moral imagination bestowed on him was over.

It is amazing that at a time when the general trend is to put a tin hat on the conscience and enter the rat race for buying economic well being at any price, a poor simple autorickshaw driver can muster such unflinching commitment to honesty! Really virtue does not always have to do with man's situational reality. People like Rahim are a revelation in this society crammed with well dressed mega embezzlers flaunting with public money. How wonderful it would have been if people who matter most in our national life were blessed with a semblance of Rahim's honesty!

Of Plebiscite and Elections in Kashmir

AD Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended the NAM summit at Durban, the talks over Kashmir would have begun sooner. In his absence, details were sorted out with Foreign Minister Aziz Sartaj. The formal announcement had to wait till Nawaz Sharif's meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at New York. A loss of few weeks does not matter if the two countries grasp the opportunity with both hands. There is no reason to be-

lieve that they will not try. But the ambience is not too favourable. The usual doubts are there and, to New Delhi's exasperation, Islamabad's proxy war has not lessened. After the report by the Washington Post that Pakistan is training and arming terrorists and facilitating their entry into India, the Nawaz Sharif government's claim of "only moral support to the Kashmiris" does not wash. In fact, it would impart honesty to the negotiations, if Islamabad were to ask the ISI to at least suspend, if not stop, its activities in India. Even a small untoward incident during the talks can derail the

effort towards conciliation. There is no dearth of formulas because Kashmir has been discussed threadbare over the years, both in and outside the subcontinent. Americans are great ones in assembling various points of view and finding some common thread running through them. But they have honestly come to believe that there is no go from bilateral

LARM bells have been

ringing in New Delhi

following the Taliban

takeover of Afghanistan. India

fears the development could

destabilise the security and

economic interests of the

Prime Minister Atal Behari Va-

ipayee is engaged in a quiet

diplomatic exercise to forge a

joint front with Afghanistan's

neighbours - Russia, the Cen-

tral Asian republics and Iran.

Former foreign minister and

prime minister Inder Kumar

Guiral has been advising Vaj-

has increased the danger of

cross-border terrorism in

Kashmir because Pakistan's

Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)

backs the Taliban, which is im-

bued with militant fundamen-

talism for the supremacy of Is-

shift could take place in the

geopolitical balance of the cen-

nificant that almost simulta-

neously with the Taliban suc-

cess in Afghanistan Pakistan

O we have a sinner (by his

Whitehouse. Of course, all

of the two hundred and fifty or

so million inhabitants of this

religious land, the United

States of America, including its

politicians, are pious, God-fear-

ing, churchgoing, honest citi-

zens except Bill Clinton. And

what a shame that he happens

to be the President! The govern-

ing institutions together with

the all-powerful media are or-

chestrating a campaign under

the able and independent lead-

ership of a modern-day

Torquemeda called Kenneth

Starr, who has run amok for

four years to impeach him and

if nothing miraculous happens.

they will succeed in their noble

endeavour. But what has Bill

Clinton done to deserve such

wrath? Has he really sinned? If

so, what is the nature of his

sin? Is it a private matter or a

subject of public interest? Can a

public figure claim to have a

private life? What about his

constitutional obligations? Has

he failed to carry them out? Af-

ter all, the American people

elected him to this high office to

fulfil these obligations. Has he

been a good President? Is Amer-

ica not suffering from too much

of democracy? Is democracy as

a political system with its

checks and balances working

properly? Or is this current

tendency to create

"independent"(therefore with-

out any control) institutions

not having a destructive effect

on the very system which it is

supposed to protect? Are public

confession, self-criticism, and

destruction of self-esteem

symptoms of a democratic sys-

tem or of a system totally op-

posed to it? (Jean-Paul Fatussi)

turbing issues which need to be

tackled. At stake are not only

the puritan sense of ethics and

redemption of the sinner but

also as Chancellor Kohl, Presi-

dent Chirac and Prime Minister

Blair put it over the week-end,

confronted by grave political

and economic problems, the

President of the only World

at a moment when the world is

These are some of the dis-

own admission) at the

It is also feared that a major

New Delhi considers it sig-

lamic ideology.

tral Asian region.

The arrival of the Taliban

To deal with the problem

Fresh elections in Jammu and Kashmir will have to be held under the supervision of NGOs and human rights activists. The government's interference in the elections since Day One has corroded the Kashmiris' faith in the Election Commission.

talks and a third party intervention will only impede the process. New Delhi's own information is that Washington does not want to impose any formula on India and that it will try its best behind the scenes to see that the talks fruc-

However, if the Hurriyat leaders in the valley are to be believed, they say that Washington has revived the proposals by Owen Dixon, who was trying to mediate on behalf of the UN in 1950. His proposals were (a) to hold the plebiscite by sections or areas; (b) to partition the state, assigning areas according to the known wishes of the inhabitants and holding plebiscite in the Kashmir valley. When I met Aziz Sartaj in Pakistan before he assumed the charge of foreign affairs, he told me that he favoured even village-wise plebiscite, that is, more or less Dixon's first proposal

The second proposal was in parts similar to the one that Karan Singh had proposed in 1964 when he was still the state's Sadar-e-Riyasat. He was in favour of disiding Jammu and Kashmir, so that the former could be merged with India at once. The Government of India reprimanded him and he gave up the proposal, which he had disclosed to The Times (London) correspondent and to me in an interview in New

India was then in favour of Dixon's proposal to hold a plebiscite only in the valley of Kashmir to which the addition of Muzaffarabad district, part of Azad Kashmir, was suggested so as to have a natural geographical feature provided by the river Kishanganga and its watershed in the north. Late Home Minister Sardar Patel suggested to Dixon that India could be given Jammu and

ground.

India cannot afford to have a situation where the choice offered would be between the Quran and the Geeta and between the Muslim umma and the Hindus. The Dixon proposals may revive the pre-partition animosities and reopen the old wounds. The Shimla agreement, that is, direct talks beeign secretaries of two countries

tween India and Pakistan, has replaced plebiscite. And this is what the meeting between for-

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

BETWEEN THE LINES

Ladakh straightaway and that the plebiscite be confined to the

However, the proposals did not materialise because Pakistan demanded control of Kashmir straightaway. Later, India also rejected the plan for a limited plebiscite. If America is trying to bring back the Dixon proposals now, it does not realise that much water has flown down the Jehlum since 1950. What was possible within a few years of India's partition is not feasible now. The Dixon proposals have become outdated because of the realities on the

means. They or their political masters must find a solution through talks and a sense of accommodation. New Delhi can-

not go back to plebiscite. Already the RSS parivar, including the BJP, is trying to change the country's agenda. from secularism to Hindutva. A plebiscite in the valley will only give the party an opportunity to inject more of communalism in the society. Suppose the valley were to opt for Pakistan, exasperated as the Kashmiris are over the rough and ready methods of the administration, the RSS parivar

will go to town with the argument that the Muslims, even af ter 50 years, have preferred Pakistan.

However imperfect, India's secular polity has come to stay. Yet it cannot take any chances when the Hindutva forces are already breathing down the na tion's neck. That there should be a mutually acceptable solution goes without saying, but it cannot be based on religion. Even if it is presumed that the majority of three million Muslims in the valley will vote for Pakistan, no formula makes sense if the 120 million Muslims in the rest of India are exposed to Hindu chauvinism The very integrity of the country will be in danger.

It is, however, significant that the Hurriyat has stopped asking for the valley's independence. Pakistan has reportedly given a dressing down to the party leaders for having raised the demand for independence Youthful Hurrivat leader Yasin Malik, committed to the cause of independence, is crest fallen Another youthful leader Shabir Shah, who dissociated himself from the Hurriyat a few years ago, never took Islamabad's support seriously. He is all right because he has floated his own party.

The elderly Hurriyat trio of Gillani, Lone and Prof Ghani which has been consistently

following an anti-India line, has accepted Islamabad's command. In fact, the three are now articulating the Dixon proposals. What they have not realised is that the formula which endangers India's pluralistic society will not be acceptable. But the problem with the troika is that it has even jettisoned the Kashmiriat, the suft culture, to In the medley of voices, what

espouse religious bias. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has suggested is not a bad formula. He has proposed fresh elections so that power could be transferred to new leaders. Already India is committed to the 1952 Delhi pacts, which gives the Centre only three subjects foreign affairs, defence and communications. There is also Article 370 to guard the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Eventually, Pakistan may come to realise that an autonomous status of the state will improve its ties with Srinagar and New Delhi. The old Rawalpindi road will open and the timber trade will revive. Of course fresh elections in Jammu and Kashmir will have to be held under the supervision of NGOs and human rights activists in India. The government's interference in the elections since Day One has corroded the Kashmiris' faith in

the Election Commission. When New Delhi and Islamabad come to discuss the modalities of fair elections in both Kashmirs, they will realise that the human rights activists can do a better job.

Taliban Rings Alarm Bells in India

The Taliban is consolidating its grip on Afghanistan and India is getting worried about regional stability. The government reports Gemini News Service, has started talks to forge a joint front with Afghanistan's neighbours because a prime need for India is to secure oil supplies. D K Joshi writes from New Delhi

prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has decided to make the Quran and the Sunnah (the saying of the Prophet) the "supreme law

of the land. Sharif may have had his own reasons to make Pakistan an Islamic state - to divert popular attention from his country's dire economic problems, particularly after the nuclear tests — but his timing has caused unease in New Delhi.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was among the first Indian politicians to warn, in an address to the state assembly on August 26, that "the victory of the Taliban has posed a new threat to our security which needs to be understood and met collec-

The Taliban has not been directly involved in activities in India, but army generals fear Taliban consolidation over

Afghanistan could lead to battle-hardened Afghans being diverted to Kashmir.

The Taliban (students of Islam) are the children of the Afghan jihad. Many studied in the 1.500 or so madarsas (religious schools) founded for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. It emerged as a military force only in 1994.

Jane's Defence Weekly has corroborated Indian fears that Pakistani military involvement in Afghanistan is deep Half of the Taliban soldiers currently engaged in major of fensives against the forces of the Northern Alliance are Pakistanis providing logistical

support, command and control. India does not want access and control of the Central

Asian oilfields to pass into

hostile hands. It has friendly

relations with the Muslimdominated Central Asian republics and Russia

Indian energy needs are growing and require that the central Asian oil is not disrupted. The central Asian oilfields have attracted US, Russian, Iranian, Pakistani, Chinese and Indian interests.

New Delhi feels the Taliban militia may find it difficult to convert Afghanistan into an Islamic Emirate.

The US air strikes on the Khost guerrilla training complex in Afghanistan, where exiled Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is stationed, shows that Washington recognises the danger of the Taliban philosophy.

The international community does not favour complete control of Afghanistan. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has asked the Taliban militia to stop

fighting and negotiate with opponents like Tafiq leader Ahmad Shah Masood and the Uzbek commander Rashid

On August 28 the UN Security Council unanimously called on the Taliban regime "to refrain from harbouring and training terrorists and their organisations and to halt drug trafficking activities."

The Taliban government is internationally isolated. Only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have recognised it.

Iran has increased its troops on the Afghanistan borders. It is against a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan for many reasons. Iranians are of the Shia sect of Islam and the Taliban are Sunni. Murderous clashes between the two sects are common in Pakistan.

Teheran and Moscow believe

American business interests have put their hopes in the Taliban so as to ensure unhindered building of oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan.

Iran is incensed by the killing of its diplomats by the Taliban militia and threatens revenge.

Russia shares with its former Soviet states fear of the Taliban being motivated by the missionary zeal of Sunni resurgence, trying to spread its bread of Islam with force.

Moscow, weakened by political instability and financial crises, dreads losing its foothold in the Central Asian region. The former Soviet states fear a flood of refugees into their territories. They believe that the Pashtun-dominated Taliban may indulge in ethnic cleansing in the northern part

of Afghanistan. So India hopes the Taliban movement will be contained by the combined will of the countries of the region.

— Gemini News The author is a freelance journalist who formerly worked for the Bombay Free Press

Sin and Redemption in American Politics

by Chaklader Mahboob-ul Alam

The Republicans want the Democrats to pay for the humiliation suffered by Nixon and defeat Al Gore in the next Presidential elections. The Democrats are leaving Clinton in droves. In this power game no one wants to be seen with a potential loser.

Power should be in a position to play his role fully and without having to worry about a sexscandal". The survival of democracy as a workable political system and global stability are the core issues in this worldview. There is an additional risk as well. The more cornered he (the President) feels, the greater the chances are of more bombings and killings like those of Sudan and Afghanistan or a new war in the

Middle East. No matter, whether we consider sin as the violation of a divine law or the transgression of a social taboo, it is clear that most human beings, including the saints have some time or other sinned. The Bible is full of references to the subject of sin. Judaism and Christianity do not stand alone in giving so much importance to the concept of sin and redemption. Islam, Hinduism, Budhism, and Jainism also deal with this subject at considerable length. So we can conclude that some idea of sin is present in all religions. It is an attempt to guide human conduct in all organized societies. What varies from one society to another is what should be considered as sin , the emphasis laid on it and the punishment for committing it. Bill Clinton is a member of the Baptist Church. Most Protestant churches use the Ten Commandments as a fundamental part of religious training and also as a part of the manual of instruction for those who come to confess their sins. So it could be considered as an acceptable

mitted by the President. Has he ever denied the existence of one God and worshipped false gods and idols?

gauge to measure the sins com-

Has he taken the name of God in vain? No. On the con-

trary, these days he is probably remembering the Lord in all earnest to get him out of this

Has he failed to go to church on the seventh day of the week to remember the Lord? No. Has he failed to honour his father and mother? No.

quagmire.

Has he violated the norm. "You shall not steal"? No. Has he ever given false wit-

ness against his neighbour? No, not that I know of. Has he ever coveted his

neighbour's wife? Probably yes. but, oh Lord, we human beings are made of flesh and blood. Has he ever coveted anoth-

er's possessions? Probably yes. like most other human beings. Has he violated the Commandment, 'you shall not kill"? Yes, although not personally. In any case, every time he has taken a decision of this nature in the name of his country, the vast majority of the American people have in a very unChristian fashion not only endorsed his action but considered him as a national hero.

Besides, only a few "heathen" lives were taken.
Has he committed adultery? Yes, in whatever way he wants to define his sexual contacts with Monica Lewinsky, there is no doubt that he has broken his marriage vow. But who is the person most affected by this disloyal action? Clearly, the answer is, his wife. Therefore, is this not a private matter to be sorted out between the husband and the wife? Or do the Americans want their politicians to be saints? If that is so, how many politicians can claim to have been one hundred percent faithful to their respective

spouses? According to Section 1 of Article II of the Constitution of the United States of America. the President is elected to

preserve, protect and defend the Constitution" and the main objective of the Constitution is "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty" for the American people. Now, where has Clinton failed?

Has he obstructed justice? Has he done anything to upset domestic tranquility? No.

Has he not done everything for the common defence of his nation? Yes, militarily the US has never been more powerful than what it is today. (I, personally dislike the idea of such concentration of power in one nation).

Has he not tried to promote the general welfare? Yes, actually if he were allowed to have his way, there would be more general welfare in his country and not less

Has he done anything to

deny the blessings of liberty to any American? No. The fact that Mr. Starr has had no difficulty in digging into Mr. Clinton's past and has exercised his wide statutory powers with such fanatical zeal for such a long time perhaps proves this point.

So, what are the charges against Bill Clinton? If the "sin" he committed is a private matter, and if today the US is in an all-time high position. what is behind all this fuss. Well, it is power. The Republi-

cans want the Democrats to pay for the humiliation suffered by Nixon and defeat Al Gore in the next Presidential elections. The Democrats are leaving Clinton in droves. In this power game no one wants to be seen with a potential loser. As far as the charge of misleading the nation on Clinton's affair with Lewinsky is concerned, it would be naive to think that a married person, especially in such a puritan society like that of the United States would not try to hide the relationship as long as he or she could. But does that make him a bad President? No. But if this inquisitorial persecution continues, he will inevitably become a weak President (he is already getting weaker day by day), if not a bad President, devoting all his time to public confessions, redemption, and to meeting with his lawyers. I do not see how such a situation can help America. democracy and the world at

Lest We Forget Professor Mofizuddin Ahmed

by Lutfur Rahman

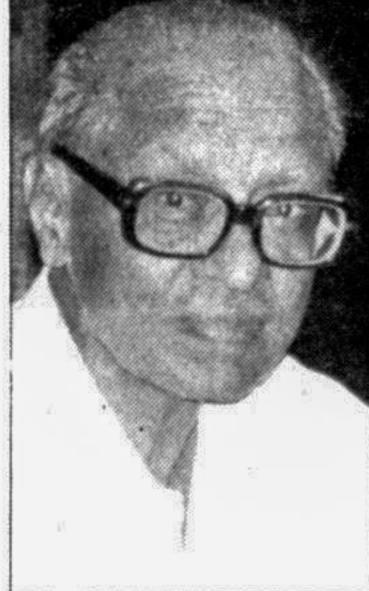
Mofizuddin Ahmed, ▲ Professor Emeritus, Dhaka University passed away on September 26, 1997. We remember him with great respect for his achievements and character.

T is one year since Prof.

in Tangail on May 2, 1921. He had a brilliant academic career. He passed Bachelor of Science (Honours) in 1942 and Masters of Science in 1944 in Chemistry, securing the second position in first class from Dhaka University. In 1948 he obtained the PhD from the Pennsylvania University. Since 1948 he had been teaching Organic Chemistry at the Dhaka University, first as a Senior Lecturer (1948-1950), then as a Reader (1950-1963), and finally, a Professor (1963-83). Prof. Ahmed was offered a Professor Emeritus position in 1983 by the University of Dhaka for his distinguished service and eminence in the field of Chemistry.

He distinguished himself by his excellence in teaching and research. A large number of students obtained MS and PhD Degrees under his supervision. He has to his credit many research papers in national and international journals, besides being the author of several textbooks both in Bengal and English. He made notable contribution in strengthening and promoting the corporate activities of the University. He was

the founder Provost of Iqbal Hall (now Sgt. Zohurul Hoque Hall) during 1954-61 and Provost of S M Hall during 1962-1969. He was the first Advisor of Students Affairs (1961-63). Under his leadership, the Professor Ahmed was born



TSC at Dhaka University was built and the student advisory programme was introduced. He was a member of the Syndicate, Academic Council, Senate and other bodies of most of the Universities of Bangladesh.

Professor Ahmed was a

member of the Pakistan Central Public Service Commission (1969-70). While in that position, he was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor of the newly established Jahangir Nagar University (1970-72). He also served as the first Chairman of the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR). In 1987, he was appointed the Chairman of Bangladesh National Education Commission. He was the founder Director of the Institute of Science and Technology Teaching.

Professor Ahmed was highly respected at home and abroad. He received several awards in recognition of his achievements, including the Independence Day Award in the year

His many students, including those who were residents of the student Halls when he was Provost, all his friends and colleagues in the various professional and welfare organizations he was associated with. remember him with great respect for his total dedication to work and integrity of character. Professor Mofizuddin Ahmed has left us for a world more suited for the kind, gentle and morally upright soul that he was; and we all pray to Almighty Allah that He also count the prayers of those who benefited from Prof. Ahmed's work in this world and rest his

soul in eternal peace Ameen.

Working 'together'

Sir, I would like to thank Mr Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank for his timely appeal to avert the catastrophe. do very much agree with the points Mr. Yunus raised and l would like to reiterate some of

the points like "Unity we must have". With my little knowledge when I attempt to think how the total catastrophe and its subsequent crisis all over the country (I even can't figure out) can be solved I lose my ways. But Mr

Yunus' appeal gave me some comfort. But full comfort can only be felt if the appeal can be translated in to action. New ideas should also be encouraged from our think-tanks to overcome this crisis.

I have an impression that our political leaders don't listen to the dailies but I have a strong feeling if all the dailies unitedly and continuously create moral pressure on leaders, it will work. For that I propose that every newspaper should keep a particular column in the front page which will appeal to the

work together. Majbah Uddin Ahmed

Sir, To a large extent, our maid servants and female garments workers save money for dowry as a preparation of their marriage. They know that nobody will agree to marry them

Maeen Uddin Sabuj 416, Zia Hall, DU.

Cruel dowry!

government and opposition to

without dowry. Can't we help them in any