

# 'Expect Modi government to keep Bangla hopes in mind'

We reprint here the interview of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to Jaideep Mazumdar which was published in Times of India on October 23, 2014 to give our readers an insight into BNP's expectations from India regarding issues of bilateral concern.

Jaideep Mazumdar (JM): What are your expectations from the Narendra Modi government in India?

Khaleda Zia (KZ): The people of India have voted overwhelmingly for Mr. Narendra Modi expecting change. What policies the new government will adopt in terms of India's relations with her neighbours are yet to be seen. We note with hope his assurances of resolving our outstanding bilateral issues. The prime minister's emphasis on strengthening Saarc is a welcome move.

(JM): Do you think the policies of the Modi government towards Bangladesh are going to be different from those of the previous Congress government?

(KZ): We need to wait some more before a clear picture emerges on how the new government in India seeks to develop its relations with Bangladesh. As India's closest neighbour, it is our expectation that the NDA government will adopt policies that will be responsive to the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh.

We also hope New Delhi will earnestly work towards finding mutually beneficial solutions to our outstanding issues like sharing the waters of our common rivers, the killing of innocent Bangladeshis along the border areas, the land boundary issue and increasing trade imbalance, among others. This will generate trust among the people on both sides and give our relations greater depth and firm footing.

(JM): Will you, or senior leaders of your party, be interested in meeting Modi? If so, what issues would you take up with him and what would be your expectations from the meeting?

(KZ): We would always be interested to

interact with the top leadership of BJP. The people of Bangladesh have put their faith in us and elected us to office a number of times. It is only logical, therefore, that regular contact between our party and BJP as well as other major political parties in India at various levels should be a norm in the interest of strengthening our bilateral relations. Such contacts would enable both sides to address all issues that are of interest to our people.

(JM): Do you think your alliance with Jamaat will be a hindrance in fostering BNP's ties with BJP?

(KZ): Our alliance with Jamaat is only an electoral understanding. It is by no means an ideological one. On the contrary, the Awami League has a long history of close relations with the Jamaat and other extremist religious groups. BNP will always set its own policies. We will do all that is needed to ensure the welfare of our people in close collaboration with our neighbours and other friends in the international community. Our relations with BJP will be fostered in that light.

(JM): Do you think the Sheikh Hasina government has taken enough steps to root out anti-India militant groups from Bangladesh?

(KZ): Sheikh Hasina's government is reported to have entered into a number of security agreements with India. However, the people of Bangladesh are unaware of the extent and details of those agreements, none of which has been made public. We are also unaware of the degree to which these have been successful. Recent media reports, however, abound with reference to arms hauls, bomb blasts, activities of



militant and extremist groups and the nexus between drugs, money and arms smuggling. BNP will never tolerate any act of terrorism, militancy or extremism. We have acted resolutely against all extremists and terrorist groups by clamping down on them, arresting them and bringing them before law. We also remain firm that we shall never allow our territory to be used by anyone for purposes inimical to the interest of India.

(JM): Are the Teesta and land boundary agreements on their way to resolution?

(KZ): At this point of time, there are no indications of any resolution on these two key issues. Many in Bangladesh attribute this as a failure of the Awami League government to pursue the vital national interest of Bangladesh. The present dispensation in Dhaka lacks any legitimacy and hence is not in any position to speak for

the people of Bangladesh. Nobody even takes them seriously, let alone engages them in any serious negotiations.

(JM): What are the other issues with India that you would like to be resolved?

(KZ): The sharing of waters of our common rivers and killing of innocent Bangladeshis in border areas have to find due priority in our discourse. The Bangla-India relationship is rooted in history and conditioned by geography. It has to be pursued based on the principles of mutual respect of each other's sovereignty, mutual benefit and mutual interest. We must also be sensitive to the concerns of the other on key issues like security and threats from terrorism and insurgencies. Sustained cooperation, both at the bilateral level and in the regional context, is fundamental to giving our relations greater strength.

(JM): The common perception in India is the Awami League is friendly towards India while BNP is not...

(KZ): There is a concerted campaign to create an impression that BNP is not friendly towards India. This is far from truth. The main success of the BNP foreign policy lies in the fact that we have been able to ensure friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all countries. Our relations with India are based on the principles of mutual benefit and respect. During my interactions with successive Indian leaders over the years, I have been able to convey to them how we can work together to strengthen our relations in all fields and that it be pursued keeping in mind the interest of our people. I got the impression that our points of view were well-received.

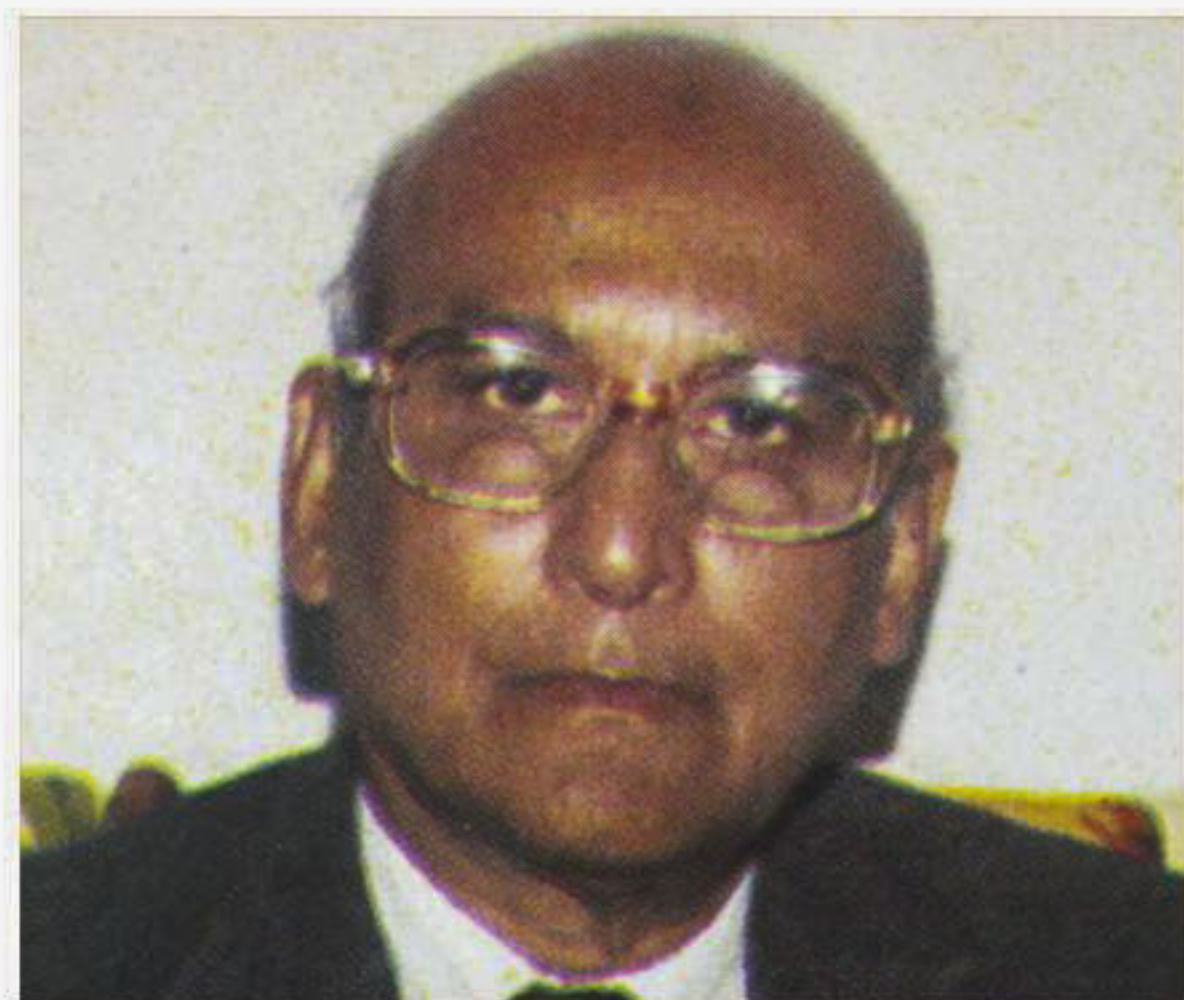
## FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

## Prof Syed Moqsd Ali: My teacher/mentor and colleague

ZILLUR R. KHAN

PROFESSOR Syed Moqsd Ali was not only my teacher/mentor at Dhaka University, he also subsequently became my colleague and friend when I served as Asst. Professor and later on Reader/Associate Professor at the same university during 1969-71. Interestingly, Professor S. M. Ali helped me in 1970 with a TV production of his own Bengali version of selected scenes from *Dialogue and Republic*, of the great Greek philosopher Plato, disciple of Socrates and mentor of Aristotle, whose student was Alexander the Great.

Following his advice I selected students from the Political Science Department to play such roles as Socrates, Glaucon, Trasymachus, Adeimantus and others, coaching them the form and substance of the ideas to be debated in the play. Again with the help of Prof. S.M. Ali, my former teacher and colleague, I sought to create for them a deeper understanding of justice, the most fundamental concept of Plato's *Republic* in the context of a growing awareness of justice for Bengalis within the framework of greater regional autonomy for East Pakistan in a reformed federal structure of Pakistan. I was worried about censorship in Pakistan TV. It could prevent the broadcast of the play, if a link was detected with the autonomy or state rights movement of Bengalis. Professor S.M. Ali put my worries to rest by making the dialogues on justice more subtle, significantly lessening the possibility of detection of such linkages.



Indeed, the play was broadcast on PTV with my brief introduction on justice as applied to human interactions for advancements and stability, and I gave due credit to Professor S. M. Ali's contributions to making the play a success. With his encouragement and help I went on directing a couple of more plays on PTV until December 1970.

Now let me "chew the honeyed cud" of my days as a student of Dhaka University from 1954 to 1958. One of the most memorable times I had was taking the class on Ancient Political Thought from Professor S. M. Ali. Gaining knowledge from the history of political thoughts and applying selectively that knowledge for political development was the main thrust of his absorbing lectures.

At least for me, what made his interactions with students really interesting was when he assigned us roles from Plato's *Dialogue and Republic* and required us to think about the ideas and concepts embedded in those roles before acting out in class. Had there been TV in those days, Professor S. M. Ali most probably would have directed some of us in one or more productions on the silver screen. No wonder he was so glad to help me direct my students fifteen years later for his Bengali version of Plato's works on TV.

Academically, I have immensely benefitted from his mentorship on political development at different levels of human existence. As Chairman of the Research Committee on Rethinking Political Development of International Political Science Association (IPSA), I have organised several workshops/regional conferences, the most recent being in Dhaka, Bangladesh, during February 1-2, 2014. In my keynote address, I emphasised the need for dialogue, justice and balance between different human propensities for peace and stability at different political levels -- globally, regionally, sub-regionally and locally. Many of my ideas were kindled in the political philosophy classes taught by Professor S. M. Ali.

Had my teacher-mentor-colleague been with us today, I would have sought his valuable advice on how to find common ground between the two largest warring political parties of Bangladesh on which a consensus building process could be created for the greater interest of perhaps the most promising emerging nation of the 21st Century: Bangladesh. We could have attempted it through a play based on Plato's concept of justice together with Aristotle's "Golden Mean."

Plato, *Republic*. Tr. B. Jewett, 1871. Barnes and Noble, New York, 2004. Bk. VII.

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## BIHARI CAMP ARSON CASE



## LIVING IN FEAR

KHALID HUSSAIN

FROM the beginning, we have seen the apathy of the police and government in addressing the attack. We went to the home ministry and were assured that the DB would conduct an investigation. But so far, there has been no report. When Yasin was alive, we wanted to file a case, but he was afraid to do so since he had been threatened. He had said: "Who would ensure my security if I file a case?" The question that remains now is, who threatened him and why?

In Mirpur, locals are living in fear so they are afraid to speak up. Since the government has come to power, we have seen some fascist practices, as is evident from the Jonny and Javed murder cases. They both died in police

custody, and there has been no progress in the cases. In the former, there are CCTV images that show Jonny was beaten and that he was taken to the hospital. Doctors said he had to be taken to DMCH or he would die. But the police took him away and beat him again, and then took him to the hospital when it was too late. He died that night. The policeman, Zahedur Rahman Khan, has been arrested for the murder of a jute businessman. Similarly, the police harassed Javed and shot him. Even though the police took him to the hospital, he died a few days later.

The police had filed a case against unnamed persons after the arson attack, but there was no case from the Urdu-speaking community. We have all but forgotten the issue now. Meanwhile, Farzana has lost everything.

According to my analysis, Mirpur's

Urdu-speaking community had openly supported the BNP candidate in the 2009 election, which I think was a mistake. As a community, we should not support any one particular party. The open support may be the reason for the backlash.

The High Court ruled in 2008 that we are citizens of Bangladesh, but the state is yet to ensure our rights as citizens and recognise us as a linguistic minority. Forty camps in Mirpur are on the verge of occupation. The National Housing Authority has sold off 40 camps. We filed a writ regarding the matter with BLAST. Land grabbing remains a major motive for the continued discrimination of the community.

The writer is Chief Executive, Council of Minorities and President, Association of Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis.

## Where is justice?

NUR KHAN

THE local Urdu-speaking community already had the notion, due to past incidents, that a group connected to the ruling party has been involved in trying to evict the Urdu speaking people from the area. We even received information that the group had used the help of the police both in this and past instances.

In the past, a boy named Ishtiaq Ahmed Johny was taken from a marriage ceremony at a nearby camp by the police and then tortured to death in custody. This was around 6 months prior to the arson attack.

The accused and/or guilty parties in these cases were not arrested.

The question arises, who is the justice for when all the members of the family are dead? There is a social need for this justice. If the government is willing, then justice can be achieved even in the absence of the plaintiff.

There is a need for the government to be proactive. The filing of a case does not equate to the completion of justice -- the police needs to investigate properly, the accused needs to be identified and the charges need to be framed clearly. If it reaches a point that the case proceedings cannot be moved forward without lobbying etc., then the future of the case is not bright.

We have been talking to the Urdu speakers, holding press conferences, taking the issue to different quarters of the government. But what we have noticed is apathy from the police in dealing with the case with the importance it requires.

We have noticed that since independence, very few incidents of violence against Biharis have received justice.

The writer is Director, Investigation and Documentation Unit, Ask.

QUOTEABLE Quote

While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.

Leonardo da Vinci

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

1 Go to sea

5 Heredity units

10 Basic belief

12 Martini garnish

13 Having many vacancies, as a hotel

15 Flower visitor

16 Writer Fleming

17 One - million

18 Open footwear

20 Astonish

21 Motionless

22 Toppers

23 "Cold -" (Foreigner song)

25 Cry out

28 "A votre -"

31 Historic times

32 Sneaker features

34 Mermaid's home

35 Ventilate

36 Long-running CBS hit

37 Removed from the oven too soon

40 "Skyfall" singer

41 Veil material

42 Meadow birds

43 Dick Tracy's love

DOWN

1 Ticket remnants

2 Virgil hero

3 Paragraph start

4 Director Ang

5 Thug

6 "Evil Woman" band

7 Premier Khrushchev

8 Equalize

9 Some cars

11 Court doings

14 Of projectiles

19 Old radio parts

20 Play part

24 Vegetable soup ingredient

25 Not dressy

26 Meeting slate

27 One in charge

29 Fishing gear

30 Old autos

33 Factions

35 God of war

38 Moose cousin

39 Not at home

CRYPTOQUOTE

9-1

UTA EJDO TAV VXM NVPMDYVX TE C RJDO KU VPUJDY VT RCHG CYCJDNV JV, DTV KU HUJDY OTRD. - LN HMRJN

Saturday's Cryptoquote: IN SCHOOL, YOU'RE TAUGHT A LESSON AND THEN GIVEN A TEST. IN LIFE, YOU'RE GIVEN A TEST THAT TEACHES YOU A LESSON. - TOM BODETT

Yesterday's answer

WASH SWATS  
ORCA HEROES  
MEOW RETORT  
ANTACID LVI  
NATIONS BIN  
IRK RACK  
RERAN DARES  
OMEN CAW  
CAP SAWDUST  
KIT URGENCY  
ELICIT ATOP  
RELATE LINE  
DETER SEED

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BEETLE HAS ADDED A NEW TWIST TO REALLY ANNOYING SARGE

HE'S RUNNING AWAY "GANGNAM STYLE"

HENRY by Don Trachte

IF I TELL YOU A SECRET, WILL YOU PROMISE NOT TO REPEAT IT, HENRY?

NO?

THEN I'LL TELL IT TO YOU...