

In league with the times not

By Mahmood Zaman

MALIK Barkat Ali was one of the top Muslim League leaders in Punjab of his times. His political career spanned over about three decades, during which he rubbed shoulders with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Iqbal and Sir Fazle Husain. His

famous 'battle of words' with Punjab premier Sir Sikandar Hayat on the assembly floor continued for about four years in the 1940s.

Born on April 1, 1885, to a kakkezai family inside Delhi Gate, Barkat Ali started his career as a teacher but later distinguished himself as a journalist, lawyer, scholar, parliamentarian and politician. He once stood alone to hold the

Muslim League fort in the province. Yet, Barkat Ali and his services for the creation of Pakistan are little known and history books taught in schools have no mention of him.

Barkat Ali was member of the Muslim League's subject committee which drafted the famous Lahore Resolution for passage on March 23, 1940. He was also elected as a member of the Punjab Assembly in October 1936 along with Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan. Raja Ghazanfar switched over to the ruling Unionist Party overnight leaving Barkat Ali to carry the Muslim League flag in the province alone.

Barkat Ali lived for many years on Temple Road. It was here that a galaxy of Muslim League leaders gathered on the morning of March 23, 1940 over breakfast. The guests



BARKAT Ali Hall. — Dawn

Lahore 1947-2007

included Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Maulvi A K Fazlul Haq, Khan Liaquat Ali Khan, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, Nawab Shah Nawaz Mamdot and Mian Mumtaz Daultana.

Malik Barkat Ali went to the Government High School, Delhi Gate. He did his BSC from the F C College (FCC) and Masters in English from the Government College. He started off as a teacher at FCC in 1905 before moving to Islamia College. He next joined the government service and his first job was that of a treasury officer at Campbelpur

Continued on Page 19

Personalities

acquaintances — to the protest.” | had sent two more cases for the | period.

the visiting children, will be | dressed in ornamental outfit.

Removalist

In league with the times not

Continued from Page 17

(now Attock) in 1907. He passed the LLB examination the same year and around 1909 took up journalism as his career. He was at first associated with a law journal published by Chaudhry Shahabuddin.

In April 1914, Barkat Ali was appointed editor of weekly 'Observer'. Over the next few years Barkat Ali supported the progressive group in the League. 'Observer' was closed in 1918 and Barkat Ali devoted himself to politics as a whole timer in addition to joining the bar. In 1924, Barkat Ali was elected the vice-president of Punjab party and thus came in close contact with Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

However, in 1927, when Sir Shafi and Allama Iqbal formed the Shafi League in opposing Jinnah on the issue of boycotting the Simon Commission, Barkat Ali was its propaganda secretary. This started a close friendship between Barkat Ali and Allama Iqbal which lasted till the Allama's death in 1938. In 1935, he single-handedly contested the case of Masjid Shaheed Ganj in the court. In 1936, he was appointed one of the vice presidents of the League from Punjab. The party felt the need of an English newspaper and Barkat Ali was assigned with the job. He contributed Rs10,000 and brought out weekly 'New Times'.

He died on April 5, 1946, when arguing a case in the second anti-corruption tribunal.

Barkat Ali Hall: Malik Barkat Ali's fami-



MALIK Barkat Ali

ly purchased a piece of land outside Mochi Gate in 1900 for the purpose of building the headquarters of the Punjab Muslim League. The purchase was made in the name of the Anjuman Islamia, Punjab, of which Malik Barkat Ali later became the president. The construction of the building, known as Barkat Ali Islamia Hall, started on February 23, 1903, and was completed in 1905. The Hall has two floors with 22 rooms on the upper floor. The building is now managed by the Auqaf department which took it over through a notification

issued on January 3, 1979.

Apart from the main building, there were annexes in the shape of nine shops and a 'katri' (a cluster of small quarters) and a mosque. Of these only shops have survived and other structures, including the mosque which was badly damaged during 1947 riots, have given way to commercial centres.

The League headquarters was never shifted to this place, but the offices of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation were established in rooms on the upper floor. The building also served as the offices of the weekly 'New Times', the League's mouth-piece founded by Barkat Ali in November 1936. By the time the Auqaf department took it over, the building had been in the use for political and religious gatherings. The department let out various parts of the building and is now collecting a total of Rs50,000 in rent.

Auqaf officials allowed plastic goods sellers to set up makeshift shops in the open area attached with the building about three years ago. The 'illegal' occupants were ejected in 2004. The building is still available on rent for political and religious meetings, but no organisation has made such a request to the Auqaf department for years.

Commercialisation has erased all traces of Barkat Ali's residence on Temple Road close to Safanwala Chowk. His house was pulled down a few years ago and a multi-story building constructed in its place. The razing went unnoticed.