Interview

President and Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud’s interview with the editor of the daily New Times of Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

April 17, 1974
President and Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud’s Interview with the representative of the daily Statesman of New Delhi, India.

Following is the transcribed version of an interview granted by President and Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud to Mr. Kuldip Nayar, editor of a Delhi newspaper. The Statesman, as released by the Presidential Office:

Q. I have seen the ideals you have enunciated after the revolution. Could you tell me, Sir, how far you have gone in realising them?

A. Of course, the ideals that I have enunciated constitute our aspirations, the realisation of which requires time. All that I have stated so far, are under study, scrutiny, and discussion, and naturally it takes time to translate them into action. Our first preoccupations are economic problems. Here we have made some headway, and it is our our hope that further results are achieved for the benefit of the country.

Q. What are the measures that have been taken during these last ten months in this regard?

A. To explain in detail all issues involved will require more time than what we have at our disposal. If you wish to acquire more information in this regard, the ministries concerned are at your disposal to furnish them to you.

Q. If I am not mistaken, I have heard of a plan and a view with regards to land reform. Has any step been taken in this direction so far?

A. Land reform, to us, is one of the valuable objectives of the revolution, and we have started to study it from the very beginning of the revolution.
These studies are still continuing and have not been yet completed. It is my hope that at some appropriate time in the future which I cannot determine now, we shall be able to promulgate the land reform law.

Q. This means that land will be distributed to those who are not land owners?

A. Land reform will be implemented step by step of course. In the first place land will be distributed to landless people. The first steps have already been taken in this direction, and we have already started distribution of state-owned lands. So far land has been distributed to approximately 3,000 families, and if we allow five members to each family, almost 15,000 people have received land and this process still continues.

Q. Are you satisfied with what you have accomplished so far?

A. Anyone who is interested in the progress of his country, and the improvement of the lot of his people, no matter to which country he belongs, the claim of having done enough for his country is mere exaggeration.

We are confronted with so many problems and the future generations should also make sustained efforts to overcome them successfully in order to achieve effective results for the progress of the country.

Q. I have heard that during these last ten months there have been two attempts at coup d'état against the republic. Is there any substance in these rumours?

A. I can say unequivocally that except one attempt uncovered several months ago, no other attempt has been made.

Q. If I am not mistaken, it is said that Pakistan was involved in that coup. Is that true?

A. There is no doubt that foreign hand was involved in the traitors' attempt at the coup d'etat and we have ample evidence and documentary proofs in this
regards. Of course we have officially mentioned Pakistan's name too, and speaking to the editor Jamilur-Rahman of a Pakistani newspaper, the New Times, I have answered this question explicitly.

Q. Do you think that the situation is now normal and that there is no danger from any quarter?

A. No country, in no way, can remain immune from dangers.

Q. I have heard many things being said about the status of Pashtunistan. It is said that Ghaffar Khan and Ajmal Khatak hold different views in this regard and some of these persons seek only internal autonomy. What is your view?

A. Since I have answered in detail the same question to New Times editor Jamilur Rahman I do not wish to repeat myself. I can say nothing further, and I am sure you have studied it (the interview with Jamilur Rahman). But I would like to mention that the Loya Jirgahs (grand assemblies) and Shuras (parliaments) and governments of Afghanistan have stated their positions on this matter unambiguously.

Pashtun and Baluchi leaders have also made attempts regarding their future, and their well-being, which in substance, do not differ much from the decisions of Afghanistan's Loya Jirgahs, Shuras, and governments.

Q. Can I ask that what is meant here is self-determination?

A. Yes, everything depends on the wishes, and aspirations of the Pashtun and Baluchi people and their leaders. The right to self-determination is the best way to solve this problem. This right should be granted to the Pashtun and Baluchi people in the real meaning of the term, and in accordance with its fundamental principles.
Q. It is said that Afghanistan lost valuable opportunities to achieve her objectives when Pakistan and India fought in 1965 and 1971, Is this claim right?

A. I cannot say anything in this regard because at that time, I held no office. Those who were responsible at the time, of course, judged issues from their own points of view.

Q. Supposing you were the head of state, what moves would you have considered necessary?

A. If I were in charge of the affairs of the country, I would have of course made my decision taking into consideration the conditions, and requirements of the time.

Q. Pakistan has always accused India of encouraging Afghanistan on the issue of Pashtunistan. Could you comment on this?

A. There is no doubt that we have very friendly relations with India, but as our Indian friends know the issue of Pashtunistan and the destiny of its people existed long before the independenc of India and the inception of Pakistan. This issue has always been a dispute between us and the government of British India and it is now between us and Pakistan. Then in the light of the long history of this issue, how can Pakistan say that India encourages and provokes Afghanistan to this effect?

Q. I would like to know what help you expect from India in this regard?

A. In this respect, we wish that not only India but all friendly and justice loving countries stand on the side of right and justice.

Q. When I met Prime Minister Bhutto last, he told me that he was worried over what you have been telling your people, particularly the students. He at that time said that he could not take things light especially when the question of dismemberment of
his country is at stake. Would you like to say something on this?

A. If Mr. Bhutto worries about what I say to our people and our students, this is up to him. And if he does not take lightly what I say, it is again up to him. That he has said a country feels the responsibility for its dismemberment, after it occurs in our view, Mr. Bhutto is more responsible than anyone for the dismemberment of his country and not us. One day the history of Pakistan will pass its judgement as to who was really responsible for the dismemberment of Pakistan. And the people of Pakistan will also find out the truth.

Q. Do you think that Pakistan will make any move, or to take any action?

A. Of course we cannot ignore the unfriendly attitude of Pakistan. In answer to one of your previous questions, regarding events after the revolution, I expressed my regret particularly over the interference of Pakistan in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Q. In such an instance what do you expect friendly countries, for example, India to do?

A. We expect of India, and of all peace loving countries to recognise realities and uphold justice. Everybody should seek solutions for these problems within this context.

Q. Are the allegations true that Afghanistan sends aid to Baluchistan?

A. I categorically reject these allegations, because they are completely baseless and meaningless. Those who fabricate these rumours wish to use them as a means of justification of bearing pressure on Pashtun and Baluchi freedom fighters and to use it as a pretext for serving their own interests. They sometimes say that you are a threat, and sometimes, they say that we are a threat, and they wish to secure
maximum benefit for themselves in playing these games.

Q. Has Pakistan approached you for talks on the issue of Pashtunistan?

A. No approach has been made so far. Only sometimes ago Mr. Aziz Ahmad, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Pakistan visited Kabul to convey the official invitation of Pakistan to the government of Afghanistan for participation in the conference of Islamic heads of state and governments in Lahore.

Q. Are you interested in talks with Mr. Bhutto on this dispute?

A. It depends on the interest of Mr. Bhutto. Afghanistan is ready to talk with anybody be it Mr. Bhutto or anybody else, about the destiny of our Pashtun and Baluchi brothers, provided there are no preconditions. We have no other problem with Pakistan except the destiny of the Pashtuns and Baluchis. When we talk of our difference with Pakistan, we explicitly mean this one and only problem.

Q. In your interview with the correspondent of Le Monde (French newspaper), you have mentioned that you have special relations with the Soviet Union. Please elaborate on the meaning of the word “special”.

A. If this emanates from the imagination of Le Monde, it belongs to Le Monde. In fact, I don’t even understand the meaning of this question of special relations. I would like to explain to you that we have no doubt very friendly and sincere relations with our northern neighbour, the Soviet Union, and these relations did not begin overnight, but started when Afghanistan regained her independence. These friendly and disinterested relations are continuing from that time until now. No doubt the Soviet Union has assisted us in economic, technical and military fields. Therefore, we call these relations very friendly and
normal, and see nothing special in them. If in your view, special relations mean secret commitments, no such commitments exist between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

Q. What is the economic policy of Afghanistan?
A. It is a guided economy. This policy is based on and aimed at serving the people of Afghanistan.

Q. You have touched on Brezhnev's plan for collective security of Asia. Please explain how you view it.
A. As I have said before that the idea of a collective security system for Asia embraces a number of principles, the majority of which are acceptable to peace loving countries of the world. Every plan for world peace and security, regardless of by whom or by which country it is proposed would be considered favourably by us provided it does not contradict our national interests.

Q. Would you say something on the relations between Afghanistan and Iran?
A. Our relations with Iran are completely normal and friendly.

Q. In this case, do you believe that Iran will cease assisting Pakistan over the question of Baluchistan.
A. Since they are both allies, I cannot say anything. If Iran wishes to remain friendly with all her neighbours, it would be better if she assumed at least a neutral position, vis a vis problems existing between Iran's friends.

Q. President Sadat and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stated in the Islamic conference at Lahore that India with a 50 million Moslem population should be a participant in the next Islamic conference. What is your view on this?
A. It would be premature if I say something on a conference which has not yet convened, and its agenda is yet not known. But as to the participation of
India in such conference, I share the opinion of my Egyptian and Bangladesh brothers.

Q. In regard to the constitution of Afghanistan you have stated that it would be democratic and progressive. Can you elaborate on this?

A. I cannot add anything to what I have already said to the editor of the New Times in regard to the constitution. If I were to say the same thing over again, it would be a repetition, and repetitions are monotonous.

Q. Allow me to ask as to what kind of constitution will it be?

A. It will be democratic and progressive, those who are knowledgeable in this field, of course, understand the meaning of these two concepts better. The future constitution of Afghanistan will elaborate on this.

Q. Will the political parties participate in the drafting of the constitution?

A. There are no legal political parties in existence yet. In any event our constitution, in whatever form it may be, will be a constitution acceptable to the majority of the people of Afghanistan.

Q. Will the constitution, after it is drafted, be put to a public vote?

A. I cannot say anything at present. Very likely it will be approved, in the traditional manner by Loya Jirgah. It is also likely that it would be put directly to a referendum.

Q. Would you like to comment on the state of Afghanistan's relations with China?
A. No doubt China is one of our big neighbours, and relations between us have always been and are normal and friendly.

Q. What are your expectations of, and views on Indo-Afghan joint commission and its future deliberations?

A. The Indo-Afghan joint commission has an economic and technical nature. It is my hope that the future discussions of the commission be as beneficial and fruitful to both sides as in the past.

Q. Are you satisfied with the assistance that India has offered Afghanistan so far especially with regard to the Indian specialists?

A. We are fully satisfied with the assistance by our Indian friends, in all fields and we particularly value the specialists and their technical advice.

Q. What is your view on the visit of the Indian military delegation to Afghanistan?

A. We and India have always had an officers exchange programme, and still have, in that context we invited a military delegation from India as a good will mission to visit Afghanistan.

Q. Would you like to say anything on relations between India and Afghanistan?

A. Fortunately our relations with India have always been friendly and sincere. Our relations have not begun today. We have historical and long standing relations. It is my hope that these relations will be further strengthened, and it is my conviction that friendship and sincerity among nations is the best way of life for our people.

Availing myself of this opportunity I should like you to convey my own as well as my colleagues, and the people of Afghanistan's best wishes to the leaders and the friendly people of India.