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Virtual meeting to condole passing of Indian jurist and former Attorney General for India, Soli Sorabji

Lalit Bhasin, President of SILF: The law reports are full of the monumental cases in which Soli appeared... during his seven-decade tenure as a lawyer.

#SoliSorabjee



Attorney General KK Venugopal speaks, recounts of the large number of cases in which he and Sorabjee and appeared in together.

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AG Venugopal: When I think of Soli, one would imagine a legend of the law, a great jurist, an attorney general twice over... and above all a lawyer who was innovative and part of the evolution of the Constitution of India

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AG Venugopal: According to me, his success in SR Bommai.. is one of the feathers in his cap...The judgment as a deathblow to the abuse of power by the Centre...

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AG Venugopal: I was appearing (at the time) for Karunanidhi during the height of emergency ...

The allegation that he had taken a bribe was sufficient to dismiss the government in a State, Venugopal recalls.

AG Venugopal: Today if corruption was the basis for dismissal of governments, I wonder how many of the governments could survive.. just on allegation of corruption, which is easy to make.

AG Venugopal: (SR Bommai) This is one of his greatest achievements... After that, the question of dismissing governments under Article 356 has become very very rare indeed.

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Soli Sorabjee was a lover of poetry, lover of music, of gourmet and above all a great human being, AG Venugopal adds.

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AG Venugopal: He recently celebrated his 91st birthday in style... I excused myself because of health reasons... I however wrote him a letter... I called him, he took the telephone and told me he would call me back later. He did not, and I felt hurt...

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AG Venugopal adds that later Pinky Anand also called him, he said would call her back. Sorabjee did not call either person.

The next he heard was that Sorabjee had passed away because of COVID.

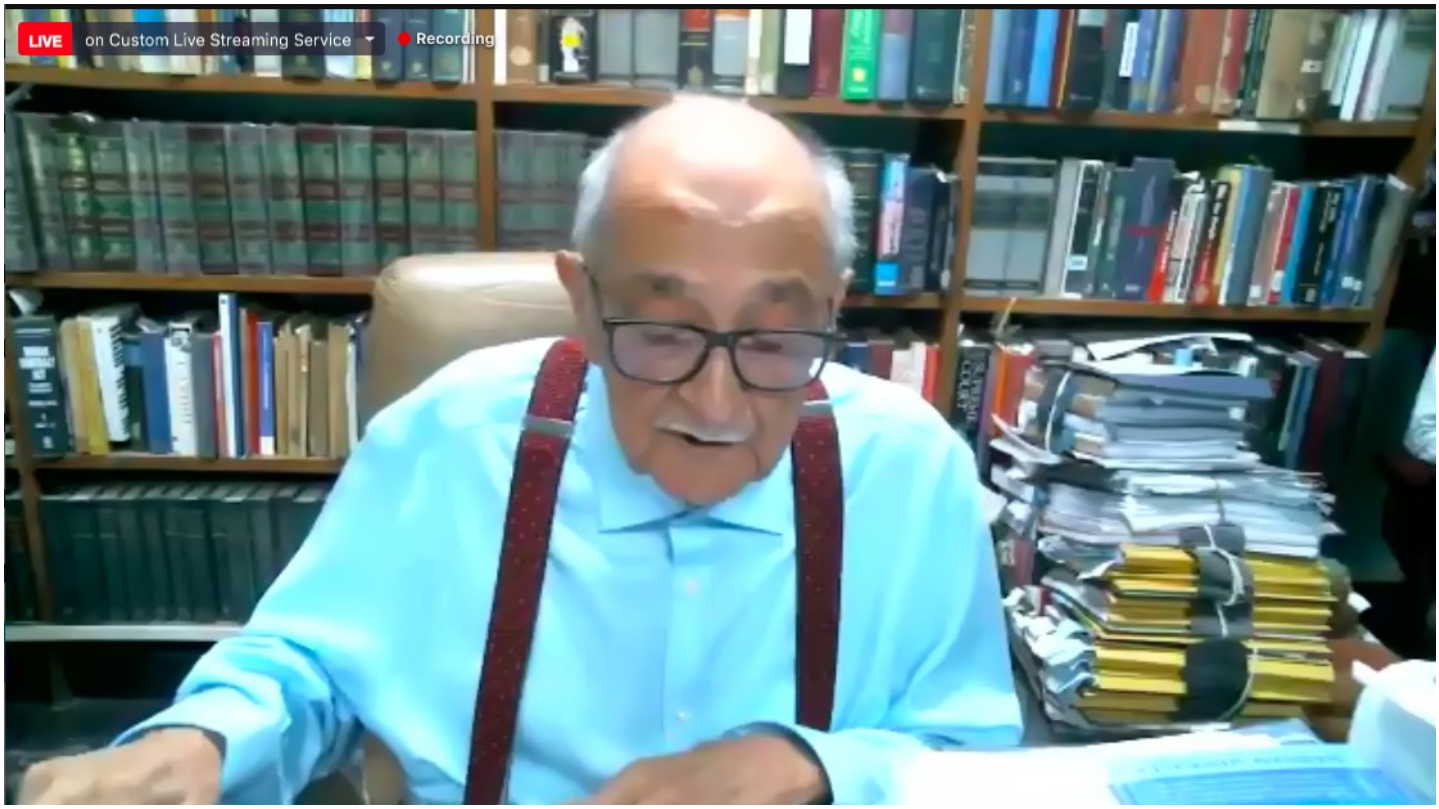
AG: Obviously, he did not want to exhaust me or Pinky...

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Senior Advocate Fali Nariman speaks, refers to tributes that have poured in, notes that Sorabjee was described as a fighter for rights, who died in honour and glory

Nariman: Permit me to add a footnote to these rich tributes

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Fali Nariman: In the past 3 years, whenever Soli and I met, we would greet each other with an exchange of reminisces... not of cases where we had appeared against each other, that was stale stuff

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Nariman recalls that he and Sorabjee exchanged anecdotes from the time they practiced under Jamshedji Kanga, "the uncut diamond of the Bombay Bar", as CJ Chagla had once termed him.

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Fali Nariman recalls one of the last anecdotes they exchanged.

Nariman: Once long ago a Senior Advocate of the Bombay High Court walked in (to the chambers of Jamshedji Kanga).. Jahangir ji, that was his first name, had come to see Jamshedji for a somewhat delicate matter.

Nariman: Neither of us (Sorabjee or Nariman) had the good sense to withdraw, we kept sitting and listening in... there were no secrets in the chamber... it transpired that Jahangir had come to seek advice ...

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Nariman recounts: His problem (Jahangir's) was that he had been a fixture as counsel before a particular judge.. and that judge had recently retired, Jahangirji had been left without work."What about my future?", he asked Jamshedji

Nariman recounts: Jamshedji, all 6 ft 4, in an imperious, slightly angry voice said "Jahangir, how old are you?"

Jahangir, looked at us again, sheepishly said, 82

Jamshedji, aged 92, shot back at him "With one leg in the grave, what are you commiserating about your future?"

Nariman recounts that Jamshedji was a person who believed that after 80 a lawyer should hang up his boots.

Jamshedji, however, would still meticulously came to the chamber but made no appearances, after 80.

Nariman: This was his story the last time we met.

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Senior Advocate Vikas Singh recalls how he once when to brief Sorabji.

Sorabji, he recounted, said, "But I have to be convinced, if I am not convinced I am not going to argue."

@vikassinghSrAdv

#SoliSorabjee



Singh: This was the stature of the man...

Singh adds that he learnt, from this experience, the principle, "Before you start arguing, you have to be convinced yourself."

@vikassinghSrAdv

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Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal: You've given us 3 minutes to encapsulate the life of a man who cannot be captured in 3 minutes

@KapilSibal

#SoliSorabjee



Sibal: If you look at the Constitutional history of India, brick by brick, you would find the imprint in every brick of Soli Sorabjee.

@KapilSibal

#SoliSorabjee

Sibal: We know about his passion for human rights, free speech, liberty... he never wavered in that passion, no matter which govt ... His contributions to the law are phenomenal.. he changed the whole concept of Article 14, 19, 21 in Menaka Gandhi...

@KapilSibal

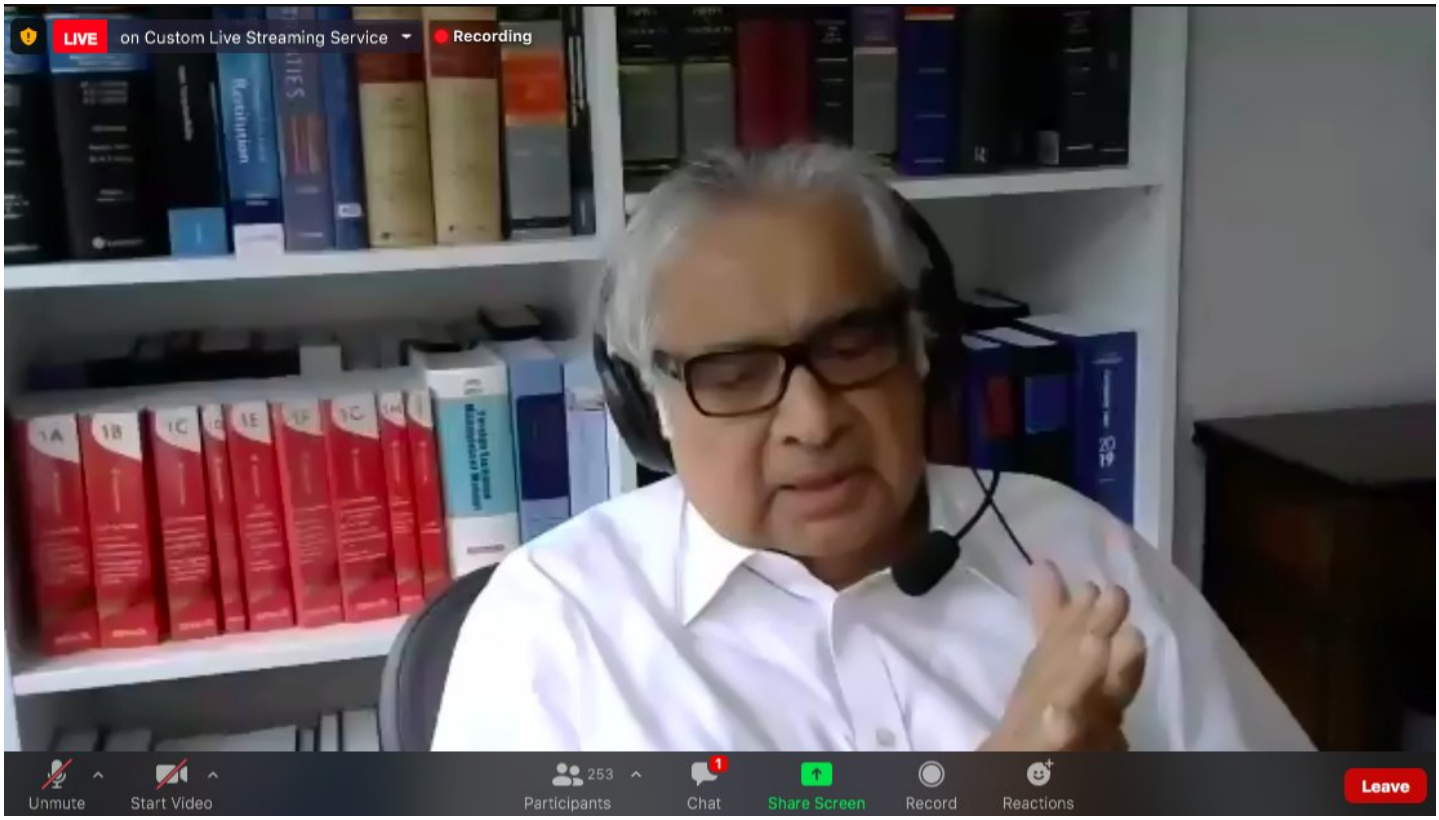
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Sibal: He was a man of many parts. The freedom that jazz musicians had is the kind of freedom he wanted.

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Senior Advocate Harish Salve: Soli the lawyer is well known, not so well known is Soli the father, Soli the friend, Soli the jazz aficionado...

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Salve recounts that when he went to join Sorabjee's chamber, he said to Salve in Marathi "I will take the oil out of you."

Salve: I said I have a lot of oil in me, please feel free to do that

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Salve: ... grudges were something alien to him. And if you were a friend who was fond of jazz, then you have a special place in his heart...He was my strength ...

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Senior Advocate Iqbal Chagla: He loved the law. But it is not that he loved the law to the exclusion of everything else... his love of literature, his love of poetry, that was remarkable...

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Chagla: It was not western classical music that he loved, it was Jaz. The improvisation, which was the soul of jazz, that moved him.

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Chagla: Soli never talked of secularism. He just practiced secularism. There was no question of religion, race... nothing of that.

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Chagla: I don't think Soli would want us to mourn at all. He would have said at 90, you have had a full life.. let's open a malt and listen to the full album, that is what he would want.

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Justice Mukul Mudgal recounts: He had a great sense of humor and was a terrific mimic. He was gourmet, he loved to give dinners.. above all, he was a humane person. He loved life and lived life...

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