



**Dr Siraj Ali**

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**Maharaja Restaurant**  
Benfleet SS7 1BG

Dr. Muhammad Siraj Ali came to the UK when he was 11 year's old, and worked in his teens whilst he was studying in school, at his older brother's restaurant, The Curry Centre, in North London. Back then, this was the only option in terms of a career move for many Bangladeshis. However he wanted to move away and find an unsaturated market, and chose a small town in Essex to open his first restaurant. He becomes a pioneering force behind the introduction of Indian cuisine in the Essex region. He has opened 8 restaurants in Essex. In his successful 48-year career, he introduced Indian food to Thurrock, and has used his success and experiences to broaden cultural understanding and raise millions of pounds for charities in Bangladesh and the UK.

His passion to build bridges between cultures and communities has seen him become an ambassador for multi-cultural integration and charity work. Since 1995, Siraj has raised over £3 million for charity, with his charitable efforts having even seen his dishes flown to 150 UN troops in the Congo.

Dr Ali's successful restaurant was chosen by MPs to cater for the first ever Bangladesh Festival of Food and Culture at the House of Commons in 2001. In 2008, Dr Ali won the British Bangladeshi Who's Who 'Outstanding Contribution' Award. In 2009, he was a winner of the Channel 5 Awards for his long standing contribution to the British Bangladeshi Community. In 2011, Siraj received the British Bangladeshi Who's Who Award and in 2015, he was awarded by Currylife magazine for contribution to the catering and hospitality industry.

In 2018, Siraj was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Essex for his

distinguished career, joining Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of Jatyo Sangshad, (Bangladesh Parliament), former UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson and former President of Chile, Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet, whose achievements are recognised by academics.

In Bangladesh, Dr Ali is a director of the Metro Hotel and Conference Centre, founder and proprietor of the Crescent Hospital, Mirabazaar, now City School, a trustee, co-founder and sponsor of Balagonj Sixth Form College and the Osmani Nagar Girls College, co-founder, trustee, secretary of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust, co-ponor of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust Anwarul Uloom Jamia Academy and Haji Soyed Ali Primary School, and Co-Founder of the Haji Soyed Ali Memorial Trust and Anwarul Uloom Jamia Hostel for orphans.

Siraj Ali is also the owner and chairman of the Al Siraj Plaza, a multipurpose building in Goalabazaar Sylhet which includes the 10,000 square feet Siraj-ul-Uloom for Quran and Hadith Research Centre and Library, the 3<sup>rd</sup> centre of its kind in Bangladesh.

In Essex, Siraj is the Founder Chairman of both the Thurrock Bangladesh Welfare Association and the Thurrock Islamic Educational Cultural Centre, former general secretary and founder member of the Essex Jamme Masjid in Southend on Sea, as well as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Essex Bangladesh Welfare Association (Essex) and former Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Catering Association Essex region.