

# 21 long years after, finally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is not the first time that Ghulam Azam has been tried and convicted for crimes he committed during the Liberation War.

He was first tried 21 years ago, not in a lawful court but in a *Gono Adalat* (people's court) in the presence of several hundred thousand people. The country had never seen such a court or a trial before.

The *Gono Adalat*, a symbolic court to try Ghulam Azam and formed under the leadership of Jahanara Imam in 1992, found the former Jamaat kingpin guilty of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and handed him death sentence.

Jahanara Imam, who symbolises the mother of all martyrs, gave rebirth to a movement demanding trial of war crimi-

nals. Her movement turned into a countrywide mass movement.

The movement began in January 1992 after Ghulam Azam was appointed the Jamaat chief in December 1991. Ghulam was still then a Pakistani citizen and Jahanara Imam protested his appointment.

This protest later led to the formation of the *Gono Adalat*.

The *Gono Adalat* sat on March 26, 1992, at Suhrawardy Udyan, where the Pakistani forces surrendered to the liberation forces on December 16, 1971.

This court considered 10 crimes Ghulam Azam had committed, including crimes against humanity, war crimes through abetting Pakistani forces in killing about three million unarmed men, women, and children and violating more than two hundred thousand women.

Late Jahanara Imam was the chairman of this court that had 11 other members. They are late advocate Gaziul Haque, late intellectual Ahmed Sharif, late architect Mazharul Islam, late poet Fayez Ahmed, late national professor Kabir Chowdhury, late singer Kalim Sharafi, late Moulana Abdul Awal, late sector commander Lt Col (retd) Qazi Nuruzzaman, late Shawkat Ali Khan, sector commander Lt Col (retd) Abu Osman Chowdhury and current Law Minister Shafique Ahmed.

Noted poet Shamsul Haque, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir and Prof Anisuzzaman were the plaintiff of the case on behalf of the people.

The court in its verdict said in all democratic countries the crimes committed by Azam must be dealt with death sen-

tence. "As the *Gono Adalat* doesn't execute punishment, we are requesting the government of Bangladesh to take necessary action against him for his offence," it said.

The then BNP government took a hardline against the court and its organisers and filed a seditious case against 24 organisers, including Jahanara Imam.

The case was not withdrawn until before her death in 1995, when Justice Habibur Rahman-led caretaker government was in office.

Yesterday, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 found Ghulam Azam guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but did not give him the death sentence, considering his advanced age and health condition.

## Stampede kills 18 in Indonesia

REUTERS, Jakarta

At least 18 people were killed and 39 injured in a stampede triggered by fighting among fans after a boxing match on Sunday in the remote Indonesian province of Papua.

The fighting was sparked by a dispute over scoring for the match, prompting some 1,500 spectators to try to flee the stadium in Nabire city in the country's resource-rich eastern-most province, said deputy national police spokesman Agus Rianto.

"There were military and police personnel present in the stadium, but with so many people panicking ... the situation quickly got out of control," Rianto told Reuters.

Most of the dead were women. Among the injured were 17 men, 13 women and nine children.

## Hartal call from rival sides

FROM PAGE 1

Kalabagan and Shahjahanpur, said locals. The party also enforced a countrywide hartal yesterday, marked by vandalism, arson and clashes with police. At least five people were killed and scores injured during the dawn-to-dusk shutdown, called in protest against the trial of Ghulam.

Of the dead, two were killed in Kushtia and two in Chapainawabganj. In Satkhira, a local leader of the ruling Awami League was beaten to death.

Even before the International Crimes Tribunal delivered its verdict, activists of the Jamaat and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir

were out on the streets to enforce the shutdown.

They removed fish-plates, causing disruption to train communications between Rajshahi, Khulna and Dhaka for nearly two hours. At least five trains were stranded at Panchbibi and Parbatipur stations at that time.

Rail communications were restored around noon.

In Dhaka, at least 15 people, including seven photojournalists and television cameramen, sustained injuries, mostly by rubber bullets, during a clash that erupted between Shibir activists and law enforcers at Dhalpur in Jatrabari around 8:20am.

In Kushtia, two Shibir activists were killed in a mob beating when they tried to fell trees to block Kushtia-Chuadanga highway at Halsa in Mirpur upazila around 4:45am, said Sohail Reza, additional police super of Kushtia, as reported by our Kushtia correspondent.

They are Al Mukit Tarun, 22, and Mohammad Sabuj, 18. Both had been residing at Bamangari in Mirpur of the district.

Another person, identified as Saddam Hossain Farid, a first-year student of Chittagong University, was left critically injured in the incident.

Shibir Kushtia district

unit president Rezaul Karim Nayan claimed that the deceased were Shibir activists and that ruling party cadres had killed them.

In Satkhira, Jamaat-Shibir men beat dead Abdul Aziz, 42, a local leader of Debhata upazila Awami League, around 11:00am when he was carrying shrimps to sell at Parulia bazar defying the hartal, said Joydev Chowdhury, additional superintendent of police in Satkhira.

Meanwhile, pickets put blockades on the Satkhira-Jessore highway at different points and vandalised and torched an AL office at Gazirhat in Debhata upazila

at 7:00am. A wedding vehicle plunged into a roadside ditch after pickets chased it at Binerpota, injuring at least 10 people.

In Chapainawabganj, a Jamaat activist was killed and four others were injured in a clash between Jamaat-Shibir men and law enforcers at Rasulpur intersection of Shibganj municipal area yesterday noon.

The deceased was identified as Nurul Islam, 43, of Mohodipur village under Shibganj upazila.

Police and witnesses said that as hartal supporters blocked Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid land port

highway at Rasulpur around 1:00pm, a patrol team of police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) tried to disperse them.

But Jamaat-Shibir men threw brick chips and exploded several hand-made crude bombs, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate by opening fire at them, which left Nurul dead.

However, Latifur Rahman, ameer of city unit Jamaat, said another activist named Ziaur Rahman had also been killed in the BGB firing. Ziaur, a 1st year student of higher secondary certificate of Krishna Gobinda College, succumbed to his injuries while he was being taken to

Rajshahi, Latifur added. In Chittagong, at least three people were injured, 22 cocktails blasted, four vehicles torched and three others vandalised.

At around 6:00am, a driver and a helper of a goods-laden truck suffered burns as picketers set fire to the vehicle on Sitakunda Bypass road, said police.

Pickets also vandalised at least 30 vehicles in Feni. A passenger and four pedestrians sustained injuries there.

Similar incidents of clash, vandalism and arson took place in Chandpur, Satkhira, Bogra, Pabna, Barisal, Jhenidah and Gazipur.

WITHDRAW HARTAL: FBCCI

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday described today's hartal undesirable and demanded that it be called off, considering people's sufferings during Ramadan.

In a statement, the apex trade body said Jamaat, Gonojagoran Mancha and several leftist organisations were transforming hartals into festivity during this month of Ramadan.

Shutdowns cause sufferings to those who fast, and disrupt transportation of consumer products, pushing their prices up, FBCCI said.

## Anti-liberation all along

FROM PAGE 1

revoked his citizenship on April 18, 1973. Ghulam Azam later visited Saudi Arabia in March 1975. He met King Faisal and told him that Hindus had captured East Pakistan, the holy Quran had been burnt, mosques had been destroyed and converted into temples, and Muslims had been killed.

He collected funds from the Middle East for rebuilding mosques and madrasas.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ghulam Azam returned to Bangladesh on August 11, 1978 on a Pakistani passport. He subsequently got back his citizenship and rejoined his position as the ameer of the Jamaat-e-Islami. He served in the post until Motiur Rahman Nizami took over from him.

Ghulam Azam was born on November 7, 1922. He studied in a madrasa first and then obtained a master's degree from Dhaka University in 1950. He was a teacher at Rangpur Carmichael College between 1950 and 1955.

He joined the Jamaat-e-Islami in 1954 and served as its secretary from 1957 to 1960. He became ameer of the East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami in 1969 (the party at the all-Pakistan level was led by Maulana Sayed Abul A'la Maududi). During the Liberation War, the Jamaat and Islami Chhatra Sangha under his leadership opposed the Liberation War.

He played a pivotal role in forming the Shanti (peace) Committee, (Razakar, Al Badr, Al Shams collaborator forces). He was an elected member of the national assembly from Tangail in the sham by-elections of 1971, Justice Haque said.

The Daily Star went through historical documents and is able to shed more light on Ghulam Azam's record.

According to records available on the Liberation War, Ghulam Azam began playing an active role in helping the Pakistani occupation forces even as the

nation launched an armed struggle to free Bangladesh soon after a massacre by the Pakistani military commenced on the night of March 25, 1971.

He was ameer of the East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami before the Liberation War. As ameer, he campaigned across Bangladesh and even in Pakistan (then West Pakistan) in attempts to foil the liberation movement.

"Pakistan is the house of Islam for the world's Muslims. Therefore, Jamaat activists don't justify staying alive if Pakistan disintegrates," said Ghulam Azam in a speech to mobilise his party men and followers against Bangladesh and help the occupation forces. (Source: Jamaat's mouthpiece the daily Sangram, 1971).

Ghulam Azam is one of

(later renamed Islami Chhatra Shibir) played a key role along with their other political partners to foil Bangladesh's independence struggle.

According to newspapers, including the daily Sangram, and books and documents on 1971, the Jamaat and its student wing played a key role in forming the Peace Committees and some other collaborator forces, such as Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams.

Throughout the nine-month war, Jamaat, its student wing and the collaborator forces actively helped the Pakistani military in mass killing, rape and atrocities.

The Pakistani forces and their Bangladeshi collaborators committed genocide and war crimes that left three million people dead

forces and their collaborators—mostly leaders of the Jamaat and its student front—picked up leading Bengali intellectuals and professionals on December 14 and killed them en masse with a view to intellectually crippling the emerging independent nation.

Though Ghulam Azam was the brain behind the Jamaat's anti-liberation efforts, Motiur Rahman Nizami, president of Islami Chhatra Sangha in 1971, played a vital role in collaborating with the Pakistani junta in committing genocide.

Nizami, who is also behind bars on charges of war crimes, said in 1971, "Every one of us should assume the role of a Muslim soldier of an Islamic state and through

containing an account of the killers and collaborators titled Genocide '71 quotes from that statement: "India is interfering in the internal affairs of East Pakistan. Wherever patriotic Pakistanis see Indian agents or anti-Pakistan elements and infiltrators, they will destroy them."

Genocide '71 also reads: "On June 18, on arriving at Lahore airport, Ghulam Azam spoke to journalists, stating that, in order to further improve conditions in East Pakistan, he was going to provide some additional advice to the president [General Yahya Khan]."

"However, he refused to elaborate any further on what sort of advice he was going to give. Regarding the situation in East Pakistan,

ence, Ghulam Azam said, "In order to prevent the disintegration of Pakistan, the armed forces had to be deployed."

He further noted, "The recent tumult in East Pakistan is 10 times greater than the 1857 Revolution in Bengal."

Speaking at a press conference in Peshawar on August 26, he said, "The armed forces have saved us from the treachery of our enemies and from the evil designs of India. The people of East Pakistan are lending full support to the armed forces in destroying miscreants and infiltrators."

On November 23, Yahya Khan declared a state of national emergency.

Ghulam Azam welcomed this announcement. He told the press in Lahore, "The best way to defend ourselves

charge of the foreign office because it is only an East Pakistani who can cope with the Bangladesh tamasha [the Bangladesh farce]."

After victory on December 16, 1971, Ghulam Azam and many others like him found themselves Pakistan and returned only after the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members in 1975.

After liberation in 1971, the first issues of newspapers of the new nation carried the government's decision to ban five communal parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami, on December 18 with immediate effect.

The banned parties were given the green light to resume politics during the regime of late president

Bangladesh, visited several countries of the region, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Beirut. After completing his tour of these areas, he left for London in April 1973.

Even though he came to Dhaka on a three-month visa during the rule of president Ziaur Rahman in 1978, he never left Bangladesh. He became the Jamaat's undeclared ameer, taking over from alleged war criminal late Abbas Ali Khan, who was then acting ameer.

In the early 1990's, Ghulam Azam was officially declared ameer of Jamaat, while Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam launched a unique mass movement demanding the trial of war criminals.

She held an unprecedented People's Court as a symbolic trial of Ghulam Azam where thousands of people gathered and the court pronounced a verdict to the effect that offences committed by him during the Liberation War deserved capital punishment.

Ghulam Azam's citizenship issue came into focus when he came to Bangladesh as a Pakistani national.

In 1991, the BNP formed the government with support from the Jamaat and in 1992 Ghulam Azam filed a case with the High Court to get Bangladeshi citizenship. The government of the day arrested him and put him in jail.

However, after Ghulam Azam acquired Bangladeshi citizenship through a court order in 1994, the government released him from prison.

In 1998, the BNP and Jamaat formed the four-party alliance and Ghulam Azam appeared at a grand public meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Ghulam Azam left the party's top post in 2000 and was succeeded by Nizami.

Ghulam Azam stayed out of focus after 2000 but he was back in the spotlight when the war crimes trial process started against him at the end of 2011.



While the nation is engaged in a life-and-death battle against Pakistan occupation forces, Ghulam Azam, left, is among a privileged few for a chat with East Pakistan governor Gen Tikka Khan, the infamous "Butcher of Baluchistan", at Dhaka cantonment on April 4, 1971. Also seen are Nurul Amin, right, and Maj. Gen. Rao Farman Ali, to left of Ghulam Azam.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



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Signature of Ghulam Azam on a donation receipt to raise funds for "safeguarding the ideals of Pakistan".

he said: "The miscreants are still engaged in destructive activities. Their main aim is to create terror and turbulence. These miscreants are being directed by Naxalites and left-wing forces."

On June 19, Ghulam Azam met Pakistan's president Yahya Khan. After his meeting with Yahya, he addressed a press conference in Lahore. He told journalists, "The miscreants are still active in East Pakistan. People must be provided with arms to destroy them."

Addressing Jamaat workers prior to the press confer-

ence, he said, "The miscreants are still engaged in destructive activities. Their main aim is to create terror and turbulence. These miscreants are being directed by Naxalites and left-wing forces."

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Genocide '71 notes that soon after Ghulam Azam with a few of his followers went to Saudi Arabia, an advertisement, in the name of a fake organisation, appeared in several Middle Eastern papers. The ad proclaimed, "Mosques are being burnt in East Pakistan, Hindus are killing Muslims and destroying their properties." On the plea that Islam had to be saved, the ad appealed for contributions.

It also said Ghulam Azam, in order to collect funds and to continue his campaign against