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Even After 90 (*thukku* 30) Years

CHINTITO

Astounded as the nation is, barring the supporters of the politico-communal guru, there have been reservations to the 90-year (in effect, 30) prison sentence meted out by the International Crimes Tribunal last Monday on mainly two major counts; one, why a death penalty was not pronounced even after Ghulam Azam was found guilty on five charges, and two, why a monetary fine was not tagged with the multiple life imprisonment, as now it will be the taxpayers down to the VAT-paying poorest of consumers who shall have to bear the cost of his long imprisonment.



PHOTO: RASHID TALUKDER

Old age was cited by the court in this month of *sanjam* for untying the noose from the neck of the *jigri dost* of the rapists, killers, arsonists, and looters during our 1971 struggle for liberation, but age was no bar when Ghulam Azam, then 49 years old, masterminded crimes against humanity and genocide, and committed war crimes.

No Bangalee father of any freedom fighter was shown mercy because he was weak at the knees and had grey hair or was almost blind and hard of hearing. No mother of a muktijoddha was spared the torture and humiliation because she was past her menopausal maturity. The tribunal seemingly failed to heed to an immediate precedent, as in giving out judgement against Delwar Hossain Sayeedi the court had earlier observed that it was punishing a man for his war crimes in 1971 and not judging a moulana in 2013.

The convict being punished for conspiracy and planning war crimes, for incitement and complicity in the crimes, and torture and killing of police officer Shiru Miah, his son, and two others on the night of Eid-ul Fitr is financially very well off. His living costs should not be borne by the State or the people. No one living in this country that the Jamaat-e-Islami leader had actively opposed locally and internationally at conception and at birth and after delivery should be expected to pay for his maintenance.

Then of course there is a section of the population, politically contrasting to the present government, who ostensibly unaware about their responsibility as citizens of this country, would like to believe that their elderly partner ally would be freed should there be a different shade of political opinion ruling the country after the forthcoming general election. Let us remind ourselves that the next government is not the last government. Even the staunchest enemy of Awami League would not agree that the present party in power would not return to govern in the next 30 years.

It is the right time to repeat here a few historical facts. Since our collective 1947 independence from British rule till their brutal military machine cracked down on our innocent unarmed people in 1971 Pakistan rulers offered at best a step-brotherly treatment to us the then East Pakistanis. We were the majority of the population and were