

Tyrant Bangla Bhai finally captured

Wounded by his own bomb during resistance; flown to Dhaka

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAMIM ASHRAF

Bangla Bhai, the tyrant who once spread Islamic militancy with the administration's protection, was captured wounded yesterday from a remote Mymensingh hideout after skirmishes with the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

As the splinter-hit and explosive-burned militant top gun was carted along the rutted roads of Rampur village in Muktagachha, the curtain dropped on his reign of terror in the northern Bangladesh where he killed and tortured scores amid the government's denial about his existence.

Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai was flown to Dhaka by a helicopter after given treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and is kept at BDR Hospital in Dhaka. Despite splinter wounds in the abdomen and burns almost all over his body, his condition is now stable, the state minister for home said.

Bangla Bhai's arrest came four days after the dramatic surrender of JMB supremo Shaekh Abdur Rahman. Five months ago the government announced Tk 50 lakh bounty on the head of Bangla Bhai, the operations commander of banned Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).

OPERATION MUKTAGACHHA
The Rab intelligence team and Rab-

9 rushed to Mymensingh in the early hours yesterday and captured Bangla Bhai's wife Fahima and minor son Saad from a house on RK Mission Road in the town at about 5:00am.

Acting on her information, the Rab men led by its intelligence wing chief Lt Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed encircled the house of a village doctor Umed Ali at Rampur in Muktagachha, 30 kilometres off Mymensingh, at about 7:00am and started searching for Bangla Bhai.

As Rab Sergeant Rafiq, who was posted in an adjacent tin-roofed house of one Chan Mia, tried to peep into the room to see who were inside, Bangla Bhai shot him once in the head with a submachine carbine. The Rab men then took the wounded sergeant away to safety.

"When Bangla Bhai hit Sergeant Rafiq, our runner Sattar identified him [Bangla Bhai] and raised an alarm," Commander Mahsuk Hasan, Rab media wing chief, told reporters at Mymensingh.

At this point Rab intelligence wing chief Lt Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed asked Bangla Bhai on a loudhailer to surrender saying that Rab has encircled the whole area and he is inside the cordon. "Bangla Bhai, you have no way to escape. It will be better for you to surrender," Gulzar said.

A couple of minutes after Bangla Bhai attacked Sergeant Rafiq, a



PHOTO: STAR TV GRAB

From left: Wounded Bangla Bhai in handcuffs soon after arrest in Muktagachha in Mymensingh; Rab guarding his blown-up hideout; Rab men check his seized arms; and one of his injured aides.



His condition stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday said Bangla Bhai is out of danger despite having injuries throughout his body.

The condition of the dreaded militant, now undergoing treatment at Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Hospital at Pilkhana, is stable, doctors at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) said after dressing his wounds at around noon.

Immediately after the capture, he and his bodyguard Masud were taken to Muktagachha Upazila Health Complex for first aid at around 10:45am. Both were injured in an explosion during the raid.

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Pray for me

Says the militant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Starting interrogation of Bangla Bhai now depends on his health condition.

"We will start interrogating him when doctors say his health condition has improved enough," Additional Director General of Rapid Action Battalion Col Mahub Alam Mollah told The Daily Star last night.

Since his arrest, injured Bangla Bhai uttered only a few words in a low voice, said doctors at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and Rab officials.

"He asked for clean clothes and washing him with clean water," doctor

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PM optimistic about uprooting terror networks

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed her strong optimism about dismantling all terror networks shortly, as most wanted militant Bangla Bhai was arrested yesterday.

She said the remaining terrorists will also be captured and brought to justice.

"I can assure you again that there is full democratic environment in the country to preach any ideology in a peaceful manner. But, there is no room

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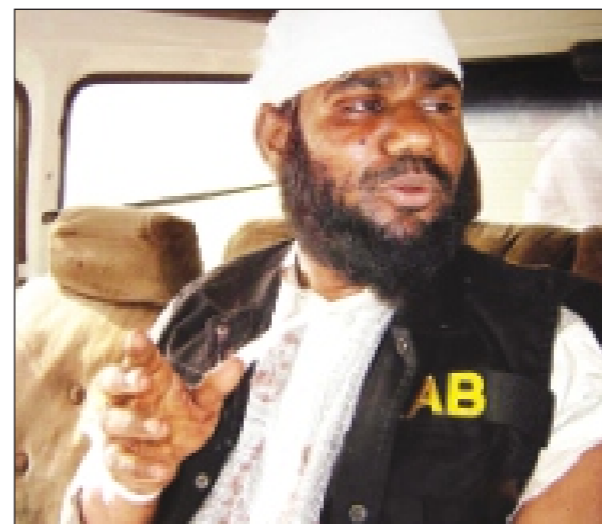


PHOTO: TV GRAB, FOCUSBANGLA

From left: Bangla Bhai being taken to hospital from Muktagachha on a rickshaw-van; he is being carried to an ambulance; law enforcers taking him to a helicopter for airlifting him to Dhaka; injured Rab Sergeant Rafiq; and Bangla Bhai's wife and child in Rab custody.

Bangla Bhai not creation of media

Admits Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Contradicting its earlier claims, the government has finally admitted that Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai is not a creation of the media.

"Given the present circumstance, there is no way but to admit that Bangla Bhai was not a creation of the media," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said responding to a question at a press briefing at the home ministry following the arrest of the militant kingpin yesterday.

He also said the government had

no clear idea about Bangla Bhai earlier but when it came to know about him, it went for action against him.

Babar also said no specific proof of the banned JMB's foreign connection has so far been found.

Replying to another question, the state minister said sedition charges against the militants including top JMB leaders Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai will be brought in a couple of days.

"Investigation and interrogation are now going on and preparations

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Rise and fall of a dreaded militant leader

STAR REPORT

Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai came to the spotlight only after his men started vigilante operations in Rajshahi-Naogaon region openly in April 2004, though he was running secret militant activities for a long time.

He was arrested in Bagerhat on August 17, 2002 in an attempt-to-murder case but was released after three months and his name was not included in the charge sheet.

Sources said police picked up him again in Joypurhat but released him in less than 24 hours.

Third son of Nazir Hossain Pramanik of Kamipara village in

Gabtolu upazila, Bogra, he was actively involved in the politics of Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, for long, reports our Bogra correspondent.

Also known as Azizur Rahman and Omar Ali alias Litu, he taught at Shibir-run Retina Coaching Centre in Bogra town for a long time. He also taught at another Shibir-run coaching centre in Dhaka.

After passing Dakhl examinations from Tarafsartaz Madrasa in Bogra in 1989, he appeared in the HSC examinations from Azizul Haq College. As he got third class in master's degree examinations from Rajshahi University, he was fired from Lathiganj School and College

in Lathiganj, the militant leader told reporters earlier.

Bangla Bhai ran rice business with his elder brother Rafiqul Islam after his master's examinations for several years.

He came in contact with Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman due to his past involvement with Islamist organisations.

The JMB chief sent Bangla Bhai to Afghanistan where he mastered operating different kinds of firearms and making bombs.

His activities came to spotlight at home and abroad after his Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh

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Villagers clueless

BISHAWJIT DAS and AMINUL ISLAM from mymensingh

The villagers of Rampur, some 150 kilometres from the capital, remained clueless about Bangla Bhai's presence among them although he had been visiting the local Imam for more than a year.

Chan Miah is the Imam of the small local mosque in the village, known as Panjakhana. He sheltered the man with a Tk 50 lakh bounty on his head, not only risking his own life but also by keeping himself aloof from his family and the community.

Law enforcers could not arrest Chan Miah as he had supposedly gone to his in-laws' house on Friday to take care of his wife Rina.

The location of the village could be one of the reasons why Siddiqui

Islam alias Bangla Bhai chose the place for his shelter even after the arrest of the militant supremo Abdur Rahman and amid law enforcers' continuous raids.

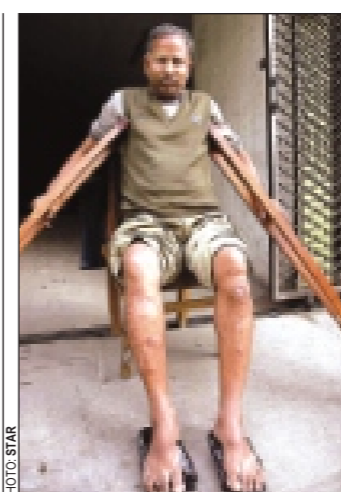
Rab said Bangla Bhai had arrived in Mymensingh on Thursday and went to Rampur on Friday.

The village under Dollah union of Muktagachha Upazila in Mymensingh, is just two kilometres away from Jamaipur, home district of Rahman, and only three kilometres from Tangail, one of the major JMB strongholds.

MYSTERIOUS 'GUESTS' AND HOST

The villagers and relatives of Chan Miah acknowledged that some mysterious guests, one of whom

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Fazlur... a Bangla Bhai victim

A great relief for Fazlur

PINAKI ROY

With a crutch in hand and a smile animating his face, Fazlur Rahman expressed gratitude to Allah and said he would distribute sweets as he heard Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) second-in-command Bangla Bhai was trapped yesterday.

Rahman, 42, a poor farmer from Hasanpur village in Bagmara upazila, Rajshahi, is one of many,

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Killing of Dulu's nephew saw his arrival

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was 2003. And it was outlaws who literally ruled the Rajshahi, Naogaon and Natore regions, killing people one after another in the name of class enemy cleansing.

Operatives of the Purbo Banglar

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Victims find some solace, at last



ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Families of those slain or tortured by Bangla Bhai and his men at Atrai, Raninagar in Naogaon, Bagmara in Rajshahi and Naldanga in Natore yesterday expressed satisfaction over his arrest and demanded capital punishment for him.

They also demanded arrest of the ministers, lawmakers, administrative and police officials and local political goons, who patronised them to set up at least 16 torture camps.

"Bangla Bhai and Rahman are the enemies of the country and Islam. It's a great relief that they have finally been arrested. Sedition charges should be brought against them and they should be awarded death sentence," said Asir Uddin, a Union Parishad member in

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Past speaks: These pictures show how Bangla Bhai was protected by the administration in his heydays. The militant chief comes out of the Rajshahi police super's office and speaks to his cadres; he marches through village; A The Daily Star reporter interviews him at a UP chairman's office; a police van escorts his procession.

'Fictitious character' becomes real

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The capture of Bangla Bhai at last proved the media were right about the militant's reign of terror despite the government denials about his existence.

The government found the reports on Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai very hard to swallow. It rather took those [reports] as a cooked up scheme against the ruling alliance.

Despite having all the intelligence and law enforcement agencies at its disposal, it opted to gloss over the way things were turning out in the northern region.

Describing the newspaper reports as not grounded on facts, the government said Bangla Bhai is 'a fictitious character', a mere creation of the media.

The government first ate humble pie by banning Bangla Bhai's militant outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) on February 23 last year.

Below are some of the instances of the ruling alliance bigwigs and high police officials repeatedly denying the existence of Bangla Bhai and JMJB.

PRIME MINISTER
Prime Minister (PM) Khaleda Zia

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