Only two women freedom fighters have been given the title of 'Bir Protik' for gallantry in the Liberation War - Dr Captain (Rtd) Sitara Begum and Taramon Bibi. Taramon Bibi fought alongside her fellow male freedom fighters in her village home in Kurigram. Initially she had come to the camp to do some cooking and cleaning. But soon her mentor Muhib Habildar saw that this young woman was strong and fearless enough to fight with arms. Taramon took part in several operations under the leadership of Sector Commander Abu Taher, Bir Uttam, never once thinking about the huge risk she was taking. In an interview with *the Star* she said: "We were fighting to free our country, the last thing on my mind was worrying about my own safety."

For 15-year-old Geeta Kar joining the *Mukti Bahini* was the most natural thing to do. After her father's brutal death at the hands of the Pak Army, Geeta took guerilla training at a camp along with 200 other women. She wanted to avenge her father's death and free her country from the racist occupiers. Although hell-bent on becoming a fighter, Geeta had to settle for the next best thing -to heal the wounded. Geeta and her fellow trainees were told to assist at a 480-bed hospital in Agartala known as the Bangladesh Hospital. It was where countless women spent endless hours, caring for injured freedom fighters and helping them to get back on their feet so they could go back to war.

'Narir Kotha' – a documentary by Tareq and Catherine Masud – reveals an incident in which a*divasi* women and men, along with *Bangalees* attacked the Pak Army in a courageous fight in Rangpur. Armed with bows and arrows the *adivasis* attacked the soldiers in Rangpur cantonment. So it was not just *Bangalees* who fought for liberation but men and women of other ethnicities as well.



'Agni Kanya' Motia Chowdhury making one of her fiery speeches.

PHOTO: ARCHIVES

Lucky Akhter chants a catchy slogan at ***Projonmo Chattar.*** *(below)*

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

