

INDEPENDENCE DAY TODAY Of valour and bravery

REAZ AHMAD

How often do you get to know the heroics of female freedom fighters? Not much often.

After 46 years of the country's getting liberated through a nine-month bloody war, women's role in 1971 is largely stereotyped either as "carers" (who assisted the freedom fighters and refugees in many ways) or "birangonas" (who were sexually abused by occupying Pakistani forces).

The valiant role women had played in different battle theatres of the Liberation War deserves a much bigger canvas.

Taramon Bibi and Captain Dr. Sitara Begum are the only two female freedom fighters who were awarded Bir Protik, country's fourth highest gallantry award.

But there were fighters like Ashalata Baidya, then commander of an all-women freedom fighters' group that fought valiantly during 1971.

This guerrilla group used the riverscape to fight and disrupt the movement of Pakistan armed forces in the greater Faridpur region.



Ashalata Baidya

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Blasts kill 5 amid raid

Two policemen, 3 civilians dead, 40 hurt in 'bomb attacks' near Sylhet militant hideout; army evacuates 78 residents of the building; Operation Twilight still on

STAR REPORT

Two powerful bombs went off at separate places near a militant den in Sylhet, killing five people, including two policemen, and injuring 40 others, even as joint forces were raiding the hideout for a second straight day yesterday.

Police suspect the bombs were hurled by the cohorts of the militants holed up inside the den at Atia Mahal, a five-storey building in the city's Shibbari.

The explosions occurred in the evening during an Army-led operation, code-named "Operation Twilight."

It's unclear how many militants are inside or if any of them were killed in the raid by the army commandos who began the operation around 9:20am yesterday, some 32 hours after police cordoned off the building around 1:30am on Friday.

Talking to The Daily Star early today, Rab-9 Commanding Officer Ali Haider Azad Ahmed said the first blast was "an attack,"

but he could not say who carried it out.

After the explosion, law enforcers found a bag while raiding the surrounding areas. Suspecting that there were bombs inside it, they called in the bomb disposal unit but the bomb exploded suddenly, he said.

Hours after the blasts, US-based SITE Intelligence said terror group Islamic State claimed credit for the attack.

"The Islamic State's Amaq News Agency reported that the group is responsible for a bombing on Bangladeshi forces in Sylhet," SITE said on its website.

The Bangladesh government denies that IS has presence in the country.

Earlier in the day, Para Commandos from Sylhet division evacuated 78 residents who had been trapped inside the building since early hours Friday.

Police tracked down the hideout barely a week after busting two militant dens in Chittagong.

Briefing reporters about Operation

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People lie wounded on a road after an explosion yesterday evening just 400 metres away from a militant hideout in Shibbari of Sylhet city. More photos on page 2.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigers roar with team effort

SAKEB SUBHAN from Dambulla

For long-time watchers of Bangladesh cricket, yesterday's first ODI against Sri Lanka must have seemed strangely familiar. Within the first 10 overs of the innings the outcome was more or less certain. Halfway through the innings home fans were cheering every boundary scored, not because the hit to the fence furthered their team's chances of winning, but because it gave them something to cheer about after a long day of cricket.

It was familiar because Bangladeshi fans had endured such events in Mirpur count-

less times. It was strange because yesterday, the venue was the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium and the team swimming against the tide were the home team Sri Lanka. The hosts were at first subjected to a leather-

hunt as Tamim Iqbal's eighth ODI ton drove Bangladesh to 324 for five, their highest score against Sri Lanka, before relying on a valiant yet futile half-century from Thisara Perera to be all out for 234 in 45.1 overs and lose the match by 90 runs.

In chase of the steep target, Sri Lanka were almost out of the running by the 11th

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Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal scored 127 to lay the platform for a 90-run victory over Sri Lanka in the first ODI in Dambulla yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

TOP QUOTE

"They [Pakistani army] did not commit genocide on this day only, they did it every day throughout the nine-months."

PROF. MUNTASIR MAMUN AT AN EVENT MARKING THE GENOCIDE DAY

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