

SHOT BY MP

Injured boy improving

EMRAN HOSSAIN, from Rangpur

Taj Hossain alias Sourav Mia, who was shot allegedly by a lawmaker in Gaibandha a week ago, is getting better every day.

Still admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH), he now can stand on his feet clutching the edge of his bed and even tries to take a few steps that way, this correspondent found while visiting the hospital on Wednesday afternoon.

During an early morning walk at Brac Intersection near his house in Gopalcharan village of Sundarganj on October 2, the 10-year-old was shot by Gaibandha-1 MP Manzurul Islam Liton, who allegedly was under the influence of alcohol at the time. Two bullets tore through his right leg and one through the left.

The bullets burned his flesh while

piercing through, said Jarina, a nurse of the RMCH paediatric surgery ward.

"He suffered flesh wounds only, no major damage," she said, adding that Sourav might soon be able to walk on his own.

Babul Kumar Saha, the doctor overseeing the treatment, was not at his office during the visit. He did not answer his phone either.

Meanwhile, Sourav's family was afraid of returning home as the lawmaker was still at large.

"He hasn't yet been arrested. We want to go home but we are afraid," said Sourav's uncle Shahjahan Ali.

Though his father Saju Mia filed a case against the ruling party MP a day after the incident, Liton has so far managed to evade arrest.

"We are trying to arrest him with no result till now," Superintendent Ashraful Islam of Gaibandha police said.

Gaibandha MP

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police said yesterday.

Around 8:00am on October 2, the ten accused ransacked the house in Uttar Shabazpur of Sundarganj upazila and left the scene taking the tin sheet roofs and furniture, worth over Tk 3 lakh, with them, Hafizur said.

He did not file the case earlier in fear of fresh attack by Liton and his men.

Israil Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sundarganj Police Station, said they were probing the matter and would take legal action against the culprits.

Abdul Hye Milton, upazila nirbahi officer of Sundarganj, said police had

raided a cold storage of Liton in Railway Station area of Bamondanga union and recovered the missing items from there. Later, they handed over those to Hafizur.

Meanwhile, Sundarganj AL on Wednesday night held an emergency meeting to discuss the current political situation there, said sources.

On October 2, Sourav Mia, a class IV student, was shot in the legs allegedly by the lawmaker for no reason. Saju Mia, the victim's father, filed a case with Sundarganj police the next day.

Liton is absconding.



Ten-year-old Sourav Mia tries to be on his feet at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday. The fourth grader has been undergoing treatment there for bullet wounds in his legs that he suffered on October 2 when Awami League lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton allegedly opened fire at Gopalcharan village of Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha.

PHOTO: STAR

TANGAIL-4 BY-POLLS

AL picks Sohel

Hazari as candidate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League has nominated Swechasebak League leader Hasan Imam Khan Sohel Hazari as its candidate for the by-elections to Tangail-4 constituency scheduled for November 10.

The decision was made yesterday evening in an AL parliamentary board meeting, chaired by party president Sheikh Hasina, at Gono Bhaban in the capital, sources at the meeting said.

Sohel Hazari is also a former chairman of Kalihati upazila.

A total of 19 aspirants had collected the nomination forms to contest the by-polls to the parliamentary seat which has been vacant since sacked minister Abdul Latif Siddique resigned from the Jatiya Sangsad on September 1.

The constituency has over 2.77 lakh voters.

Latif Siddique was expelled from the AL and the cabinet for his remarks on Hajj made in the US in September last year.

N Korea primes its capital for military spectacular

AFP, Pyongyang

Pyongyang was a city of orchestrated mass motion yesterday, as the North Korean capital was primed and prepared for the mother of all birthday parties.

In squares across the city, brass bands rehearsed, flag-waving children marched and women dressed in traditional, brightly-coloured hanbok dresses went through their dance routines ahead of Saturday's grand celebration of the ruling Workers' Party 70th anniversary.

The numerals "10-10", representing the party's October 10 "birth" date, were everywhere -- painted on giant posters that lined the streets or etched out in lavish flower arrangements adorning major crossroads.

Alexievich wins

FROM PAGE 1

Alexievich has drawn international acclaim for her moving accounts of Chernobyl, World War II and the war in Afghanistan crafted through thousands of interviews with men, women and children.

"By means of her extraordinary method -- a carefully composed collage of human voices -- Alexievich deepens our comprehension of an entire era," the Academy wrote.

The Academy's permanent secretary Sara Danius said she had spoken to Alexievich, who reacted to the news with just one word: "Fantastic".

Alexievich, only the 14th woman to win the prize since it was first awarded in 1901, had been the top choice among literary observers and among the bookies' favourites.

Danius, speaking to the Nobel Foundation, called her "an extraordinary writer", saying "it's a history of emotions she's offering us."

By chronicling her thousands of interviews, "she's offering us a history of a human being about whom we didn't really know that much, at least not in this systematic manner. At the same time she's offering us a history of emotions. A history of the soul if you wish," she said.

Alexievich takes home the sum of eight million Swedish kronor (around \$950,000 or 855,000 euros). The last woman to win was Canada's Alice Munro in 2013.

Alexievich has seen her works translated into numerous languages and has scooped several international awards.

But her books, controversially written in Russian, are not published in her home country, long ruled by authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, amid what the author has described as "a creeping censorship".

She began tape-recording accounts of female soldiers who took part in World War II while she was working as a local newspaper reporter in the 1970s.

The resulting book, "War's Unwomanly Face", was long barred from publication because it focused on personal tragedies and did not emphasise the role of the Communist Party. It was finally published in 1985 under the perestroika reforms.

Alexievich later used the same technique of first-person testimonies

to document the despair of mothers who lost their sons in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan -- in "Zinky Boys".

"I need to catch a person at a moment when they have been shaken up," Alexievich told Russia's Ogonyok weekly magazine.

"It's very important to listen when someone is speaking up. I always keep my ear to the ground."

In 1998, she published "Voices From Chernobyl", a collection of horrifying accounts from people who had worked on the nuclear clean-up of the 1986 disaster. The fall-out affected Belarus more than any other country.

Her most recent book "Second-Hand Time" -- a non-fiction work examining the legacy of the Soviet mentality over 20 years after the collapse of Communism -- was awarded France's prestigious Prix Medicis essay in 2013.

Since Lukashenko came to power in 1994, Alexievich's books have not been published in Belarus and she has lived most of her life on writers' scholarships in Italy, Germany, France and Sweden.

Alexievich has openly criticised Lukashenko's tight control of Belarus under a Soviet-style economic system and the country's continued use of the death penalty.

She has also weighed into the debate over the crisis in Ukraine by praising protestors who ousted Kremlin-backed leader Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 for trying to shatter the links with the country's Soviet history.

"Ukraine is an example for all. The desire to break completely with the past is worthy of respect," she said in an interview.

The author has however angered the literary and intellectual elite in Belarus by writing in Russian, not in the Belarussian language, amid a strong drive to revive national culture and language.

The Nobel awards week continues today with the other most closely-watched Nobel award, the peace prize.

The economics prize will wrap up this year's Nobel season on October 12.

The laureates will receive their prizes at ceremonies in Stockholm and Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of prize creator Alfred Nobel, a Swedish philanthro-

Is nat'l unity possible?

FROM PAGE 1

still advising their citizens to maintain "high degree of cautions". Several foreign missions in Dhaka, including the embassies of Japan and Spain, have cancelled their prescheduled programmes "due to unavoidable situations".

Some potential garment buyers have reportedly postponed their visit to Bangladesh.

Against this backdrop, Fakhru in his call at the party's Nayapaltan office yesterday said, "Democracy and national consensus is a must to combat them [militancy and extremism] ... An inclusive general election is also needed immediately if we want to reach a national consensus..."

"I am urging the government to ignore petty political interests and track down the real perpetrators of the killing of two foreign nationals."

Some senior BNP leaders, however, said they were not sure if it was a party decision because they were not consulted about it.

Whatever it is, AL leader Hanif reacted to it sharply, terming the call "ridiculous" and "bizarre".

He said there was no possibility of

forging any sort of unity with the BNP-Jamaat alliance, because it was during the BNP-Jamaat rule that the country saw the rise of militancy.

"Forging any unity with the BNP is to give rise to militancy anew," he said.

At a meeting of its Parliamentary Board on Tuesday, the AL blamed the BNP-Jamaat for the killing of Cesare Tavella on September 28 and Kunio Hoshi on October 3. They were shot by unidentified assailants who came on motorbikes in both cases.

On Monday, the cabinet at a meeting also held the BNP-Jamaat responsible for the murders.

Earlier, Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina herself squarely put the blame on BNP-Jamaat.

"They [BNP-Jamaat] must have had a hand in this. There is no doubt about it... We are taking actions ... The culprits will definitely be caught and tried," she told a press conference on Sunday.

On Tuesday, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, PM's son and also her ICT adviser, claimed to have "information from a reliable source" that the BNP-Jamaat was involved in the two killings.

"They have done this in a desperate attempt to turn foreign governments

against our country and destabilize it. This information comes from within the BNP in London," he wrote on his Facebook page.

So there cannot be any discussion with the BNP over any kind of national unity, AL leaders said, adding that the government had no plan to hold talks with the opposition party.

Contacted, former chief election commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda said the government needed to sit with different political parties, professional bodies and civil society members for creating national unity to fight militancy and terrorism.

"The government alone will not be able to tackle this issue. A national unity is a must to find ways to uproot militancy from the country," he told The Daily Star.

Citing the example of India, he said there were sharp differences among the political parties there but they worked together when it came to national interest.

"There will be differences of opinion and disagreements among political parties. But it would be better if our politicians and other stakeholders can sit together and find a sustainable solution

Railway reels from manpower crisis

FROM PAGE 1

Pakistan era, donors advised the railway to reduce the headcount to cut losses.

The railway lost half its manpower by 2000 -- it suspended recruitment in 1985 and sent 10,000 workers into retirement through a plan named golden handshake in 1992.

The total workforce came down to 23,624 in 2012 as a number of fresh hiring processes later were marred by corruption and irregularities.

Job seekers filed 40 writ petitions against the hiring process alleging corruption, officials in Rail Bhaban told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, over 1,000 employees were retiring every year, continuing to deplete the already meagre workforce.

This crisis of workers forced the railway to close a number of money-losing routes, sheds, depots and stations. Some passenger train services were also stopped, according to the railway's Information Book 2009.

An official at the Rail Bhaban, the railway HQ, said about 140 stations were closed, shrinking rail services. Besides, two to three stations were being closed every year.

"There is a crisis of loco masters, booking clerks, attendants and security guards. The authorities had to hire back a good number of retired staff to keep the current operation running," said a senior official.

FAILED ATTEMPTS
Bangladesh Railway moved to recruit 1,656 people in various positions in 2006, the first time in two decades.

But the process had to be cancelled because applicants alleged some officials had taken bribes promising jobs. Without any enquiry, the communications ministry made a fresh move to hire 3,586 people in 2007.

A number of candidates selected in 2006, who did not get jobs in 2007, then filed writs challenging the fresh recruitment.

The High Court slapped a stay on the process, officials said.

Another attempt to recruit 7,275 people in 2010 also got nowhere, as candidates of 2006 took the issue to the

CURRENT MANPOWER

CLASSES	APPROVED POST	APPO-INTED	VACANT POSTS
Officers (grade-1)	548	425	123
Officers (grade-2)	1,356	857	499
Class III employees	21,876	14,822	7,054
Class IV	16,484	12,249	4,235
TOTAL	40,264	28,353	11,911

court again and got a stay order from the HC.

Four attempts to appoint 16,000 staff until 2011 failed mainly due to allegations of corruption and court orders.

There were allegations of improper selection procedures and jobs for bribes.

Some railway officials also alleged several syndicates of politicians, railway officials and ruling Awami League-backed union leaders had their hands in the recruitment process to get their men in.

These syndicates made crores of taka from "recruitment business," railway sources said on conditions of anonymity.

After becoming the rail minister, Suranjit Sengupta in 2011 moved to hire 4,892 people. This time too the process was suspended because of the so called "railwaygate scandal."

The scandal broke in April that year when Tk 70 lakh was recovered from a microbus of the then assistant personal secretary of Suranjit at the BGB Headquarters gate in Dhaka. Reportedly, the money was bribes from job seekers.

The railway general manager (east) Yusuf Ali Mridha and divisional security commander Enamul Huq were riding in the microbus.

Suranjit lost his portfolio after that. Mridha and Huq were suspended and are now undergoing trial.

In June 2012, the railway tried again to recruit 1,834 personnel, including cleaners, guards and trolley men. But court orders held up hiring to important posts like drivers and station masters.

The railway struggles to operate trains

smoothly with a severe shortage of drivers. "With the limited number of drivers, we somehow manage to run 339 passenger trains but the operation of 30 freight trains suffers severely," said a senior official.

UPCOMING RECRUITMENT

The railway is going to recruit 67 more assistant drivers which would ease the driver crisis a little but recruitment of station masters seems a long way off.

An attempt to recruit 81 assistant station masters was made in 2006 but it was cancelled amid allegation of irregularities the following year. In the last 10 years, only 14 of them could be appointed.

Establishment section officials said a fresh move was underway to appoint 91 assistant station masters. "Three station masters are required to run a station round-the-clock," said an official, adding that currently two station masters were doing extra four hours of duty to cover the time.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway has created 300 new positions of station masters to reopen some closed stations. It is seeking approval for the appointments.

Legal complications have also dogged the appointment of gatekeepers. There are only 242 gatekeepers now but the railway needs 785.

In 2011, the railway tried to recruit 432 gatekeepers but railway's on contract gatekeepers filed several writs and got a stay order.

"We hire men on daily and monthly basis as gatekeepers," said an official at the establishment section.

The railway is planning to hire 100 more retired drivers and since early last year, some 5,000 people have been appointed to different sections.

"We are going to recruit several thousand people in different tiers of the railway within the next one year," said Director Establishment of Railway Prodig Kumer Saha.

Train controllers, security guards, cleaners, sweepers, booking assistants, gatekeepers, porters and waymen are

Shooting of a boy by a lawmaker

FROM PAGE 1

Another AL MP, Sheikh Afl Uddin of Jessore, assaulted the officer-in-charge of a police station of his constituency in August 2010. He also became an MP of the current parliament.

There is also AL MP Abdur Rahman Bodi, who has been a glaring example of how a ruling party lawmaker enjoys unlimited immunity and freedom.

This August Bodi again beat up a government official in his constituency in Cox's Bazar. He punished Mostofa Minhaz, Ukha upazila engineer, for not attending an Upazila Parishad meeting.

Bodi has kept assaulting people in his constituency since 2009 right after he became an MP. The list is long, school teachers, forest and bank officials, a Roads and Highways offi-

cial, a freedom fighter and a lawyer among many others were assaulted by him. He had to face little trouble for these offences. The only reason seems that he is an MP of the ruling AL.

Ruling AL MP Pinnu Khan's son Bakhtiar Alam Rony has done something more outrageous. On an April night, he shot and killed two people in the capital's New Eskaton only because he didn't like being stuck in Dhaka's notorious traffic jam.

But no exemplary action has been taken against any of them. This keeps the culture of impunity going and their unruly activities keep undermining the image of the parliament.

It would seem that the formulation of a code of conduct for MPs and its strict enforcement is an urgent need.

But unfortunately, a move to have a code of conduct has fizzled out some

time back.

AL MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who is now president of Inter-Parliamentary Union, had placed a bill in the ninth parliament in 2010 seeking the formulation of a code of conduct. The parliamentary standing committee on the private members' bills and resolutions had also recommended passing of the bill to ensure ethical standards for lawmakers. But the parliament has ignored the recommendation. The bill placed in the last parliament has lapsed with expiry of the tenure of the ninth parliament in January 2014.

The lack of any code of conduct and the existing culture of impunity allow some MPs to keep doing controversial acts and break and bend rules at a cost to the honour and dignity of our parliament.