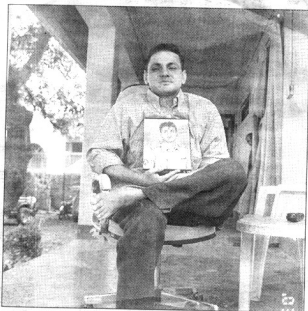


ROLL OF HONOUR: SHEIKH MOHAMMED ALLAUDDIN, SUB-INSPECTOR, BIHAR POLICE, PATNA

On a hot June day in 2001, Bihar Police Sub-inspector Sheikh Mohammed Allauddin took the biggest gamble of his life. He won the first gambit but ended up losing the game rather badly. It all happened in a matter of minutes; his life peaked and then plunged down an abyss where he was left with nothing but a twisted body and bitter memories of unrequited heroism.

Allauddin was on duty at Patna's posh Patliputra Colony that afternoon, tasked to prevent a kidnap bid on a local businessman by gangsters of Mohammed Shahabuddin, mafia don and RJD MP from Siwan in north Bihar. The police had been tipped off and Allauddin and



after the incident the government did recommend him for the President's Police Medal but guess who accompanied Allauddin on the Bihar government's list? One Mohammed Ikram whose only qualification was that he was Laloo's driver.

Ikram's name was dropped from the list of awardees by Rashtrapati Bhawan but that was small consolation for Allauddin. "I almost lost my life in the line of duty. What is left of it I will spend in a wheel-chair. Is there any recognition in this country for those who risk all doing their job?" he asks. He doesn't know if standing up to Shahabuddin's men has somewhere been a factor in the manner he has been

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his special tasks unit had laid a trap in the narrow lane that led to the businessman's house.

But when the kidnapers arrived—two of them on a motorcycle, the pillion brandishing automatic weapons—the advance guard deserted position and left Allauddin exposed. Even though alone, he challenged them and fired after his warnings went unheeded. The mobsters fired back and drove past Allauddin, intent on accomplishing their mission.

Allauddin gave them chase, firing as he ran, and hit the rider. The pillion, however, managed to leap off, take shelter behind a wall and fire back. Allauddin took five shots in his abdomen and four bullets in his left leg. He fell, of course, but he had enough rage burning within

him by then to kill both gangsters. They were later identified as Raju and Armaan, both well-known henchmen of Shahabuddin.

Later that evening, Chief Minister Rabri Devi and RJD chief Laloo Yadav visited Allauddin in hospital at the head of concerned and congratulatory processions. The best treatment was the least he was promised. There would be an out-of-turn promotion for his rare act of bravery, a cash award and, of course, all the accolades the state had within its means to shower on him.

Three years later, the Sub-inspector is still waiting. They saved his life, of course; he was flown off to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi for urgent surgery and treatment. He returned home six months later, alive

but permanently consigned to a wheel-chair and tagged with a Rs 4 lakh medical bill. "Not only did nobody from the Bihar government come to see how I was doing, they also refused to pay my medical bills. I am still knocking on doors to find out if they will live up to their promise, but there is nobody there to answer. I am an invalid, am under huge debt, I cannot send my children to school, what good was doing what I did? I would have been better off running away that afternoon like the others, or lining my pockets in the courts of people like Shahabuddin."

No promotions came Allauddin's way, routine or out-of-turn. There was no increment in his salary, nor so much as a pat on the back in his service record. Two years

treated but he does know that even those who are trying to carve a career out of decrying Shahabuddin and other evils have given him no quarter.

Referred to DP Ojha, the former director-general of Bihar Police who went out of the job in a blaze of self-appointed glory (Ojha said he was shunted out because he put Shahabuddin behind bars), Allauddin said, "Shortly before he was ousted, I had gone to meet Mr Ojha. I was in a wheel-chair and had all my papers in order and I asked him if he could help me at least get my dues back and he said, 'These matters do not interest me.' Is that how you promote honesty? Is that how you treat a man who has done his job?"

- SANKARSHAN THAKUR