

Remembering bra

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KOLKATA: Pervez still finds it difficult to eat or sleep when he thinks about the victims of Stephen Court he could not save and who died in front of his eyes. Akhil and Arati Nag stare at the things left in their son Tanmay's room, knowing that he will never return. Both were felicitated at the 18th Godfrey Philips Bravery Award ceremony on Thursday.

On March 23, Pervez Akhtar, a driver at Hotel VIP International near Park Street, heard cries for help. "I was having cold drink when I saw a girl wearing jeans and a T-shirt jump from Stephen Court, which was on fire. She died on the spot," Akhtar said. He ran towards the building and climbed to the fourth floor, which was on fire, and smashed the window before stepping into the inferno.

"Nothing was visible. There was too much smoke. I saw a fat man walking on the ledge. I tried to help him with a rope but he missed it several times. He became impatient, probably overcome by the smoke and the heat of the fire and slipped to his death. It was horrible and I saw him die," said the resident of Ekbalpore.

Soon, the smoke overcame Akhtar and he blacked out. After gaining consciousness, Pervez saved two women by throwing a rope at them with the help of which they shimmied down. He also removed five gas cylinders from the floor, which would



■ Tanmay Nag's parents break down as they receive the award for their son and (right) Pervez Akhtar and Raj Malik after being felicitated.

definitely have fuelled the blaze. Later, he was taken to the hospital and kept in the intensive care unit for days. Raj Mullick helped Akhtar and together they saved more than 60 lives. On Thursday, the duo got a cash reward of Rs 11,000 each and a certificate. Both are working as Kolkata Police home guards.

On February 26, 2009, Tanmay left home in the morning for work. He saw a woman crossing the railway track with her

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PERVEZ AKHTAR
Stephen Court saviour

child while talking on the cellphone. "The woman was so busy talking that she did not see a

train coming towards them. My son screamed to alert her but she could not hear. As a last resort, my son jumped to help them. He managed push them to safety but could not save himself," Arati said while wiping away tears.

The pharmaceutical company where his son worked gave a meagre compensation amount. "Since he did not die on duty, we got a pittance," said Tanmay's father, receiving the bravery award, a certificate and

Rs 50,000. They unanimously complained, "The woman whom my son saved never came to the forefront." Such is the irony of life.

Murshidabad's Bhavta's Babbar Ali opened a school Ananda Shiksha Niketan in 2002 on his ancestral land when he was only nine years. Now, it has 977 students from Class I to Class VIII. The school also has 5 teachers between the age of 13 and 18 and Ali is now the headmaster. He received the Mind of Steel

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ARATI NAG
Tanmay's mother

award and Rs 50,000. "Most students are girls and I appealed to villagers after making door-

to-door visit," said Ali.

Amita Sen and Ratna Sen of All Bengal Women's Union (ABWU) received the Amodini Award of Rs 1 lakh for empowering poor and exploited women by giving them adequate education and vocational courses to become self independent. "We had been doing this for 75 years and we have got women who had suffered mentally and physically," said Amita Sen, general secretary of ABWU.

Amodini Award has been

introduced in the bravery award for emphasis on empowerment of women and the girl child. "We are looking forward to work with NGOs such as ABWU and to reach out at the district level and help empower women," said Harmanjit Singh, general secretary, Godfrey Phillips Bravery Awards. "Brave citizens like winners of our award keeps the social fibre intact and can become a role model and help society function better."