

## Five to die for rape, killing in Faridpur

UNB, Faridpur

Five young men have been sentenced to death for rape and killing of a young woman in Dangi village of Char Bhadrans upazila about three years ago.

Samsunnahar Begum, judge of the special court, on March 30 handed down the death penalty to Alamgir Khan, Alamgir Karikar, Alamgir Mondal, Kalam Mondal and Rafiq Mondal of the same village.

According to the prosecution, the culprits seduced Rabeya Begum, 25, mother of a boy and abandoned by her husband, to a secluded place on the night of August 5, 1999. There she was gang-raped by the five youngsters.

Fearing that Rabeya might tell the police, they inflicted multiple injuries on her body with knife. Thinking her dead, they threw Rabeya to a marshy field behind the cinema hall at Char Bhadrans.

In the morning she was rescued by the local people and rushed to the health complex in a critical condition. Later, Rabeya was

shifted to Faridpur general hospital where she died within 15 days of admission.

Before death in the hospital, Rabeya narrated to the police the incident naming the culprits who stabbed her indiscriminately after sexually assaulting her.

Her father Abul Kashem Fakir then filed a case under the Women and Child Repression Act against the culprits and police arrested them all.

## Ershad goes to KSA for medical check-up

UNB, Dhaka

Former president and Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad left Dhaka yesterday for Saudi Arabia for medical check-up.

He will perform Umrah in the holy city of Makkah today (Thursday), said a JP press release yesterday.

## Jalal murder Hearing of case adjourned till April 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday adjourned the hearing of Jalal Ahmed Shafi murder case till April 10.

Judge Mohammad Habibur Rahman adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

Earlier, two prosecution witnesses, including wife of the victim Jalal, were cross-examined.

Jalal, an informant and driver of the DB of DMP, was beaten to death. His body was found in the water tank on the roof-top of the DB office at Minto Road in the city. Jalal was killed reportedly over sharing money.

The decomposed body of Jalal was recovered from the water tank on March 25, 1999.

The accused Havilder Billal, constable Abdur Rouf and canteen manager Anwar Hossain were present in the court during the hearing. Inspector Ziaul Ahsan the main accused in the case, was not produced in the court due to his illness.

## Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

It is the duty of the students and their leaders to speak the truth to the new generation to make them aware of sacrifices of the heroes who liberated the country through a long struggle under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, she stressed.

She alleged that pro-government terrorists and police attacked BCL workers in different parts of the country when they were on way to the capital to attend their national.

Hasina recalled the contribution of BCL in the Language Movement, Liberation War and anti-autocracy movement.

Referring to the graft cases against her, the former prime minister said those were intended to throttle the opposition's voice. The Awami League government was not involved in any corruption during its tenure, she said.

Presided over by Bahadur Bepari, the inaugural session was also addressed by Ajay Kar Khokon, vice presidents of BCL Shahabuddin Farazi and Aminul Islam.

The AL leaders present included Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Anu, Abdul Hamid, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Abdul Jalil, city mayor Mohammad Hanif, Sabar Hossain Chowdhury and Obaidul Kader.

## Ghorashal plant

FROM PAGE 12

at snail's pace, Technopromexport on January 14 suddenly announced that a big consignment of equipment and other materials would soon arrive at the Mongla port and the PDB should immediately clear these from the customs.

The Russian company did it in spite of suggestions from the PDB not to import any equipment without making the contract effective. The equipment were later discovered to be old and refurbished and have been lying with the Mongla customs till date.

## Currency haul

FROM PAGE 12

The customs officials told The Daily Star that the raid was conducted following information that a huge amount of foreign currency was to be shipped out by two Biman employees yesterday.

It was the second biggest currency haul by customs in recent times. Earlier, customs recovered foreign currencies equivalent to Tk. 10 crore.

Biman has initiated a departmental investigation into the incident. Ten employees of the BFCC have been suspended for their alleged involvement in the attempted smuggling of foreign currencies. Biman officials also served a show-cause notice on some of the senior Biman officials.

The SEC on Tuesday served a show cause notice on the DSE CEO to respond within three days as to why actions would not be taken against him under Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969, for not informing SEC despite being aware of the faulty surveillance software.

## WB loan

FROM PAGE 12

Electrification Board (REB). The rest 13 million dollars will be utilised as technical assistance for strengthening the Power Cell for effective monitoring.

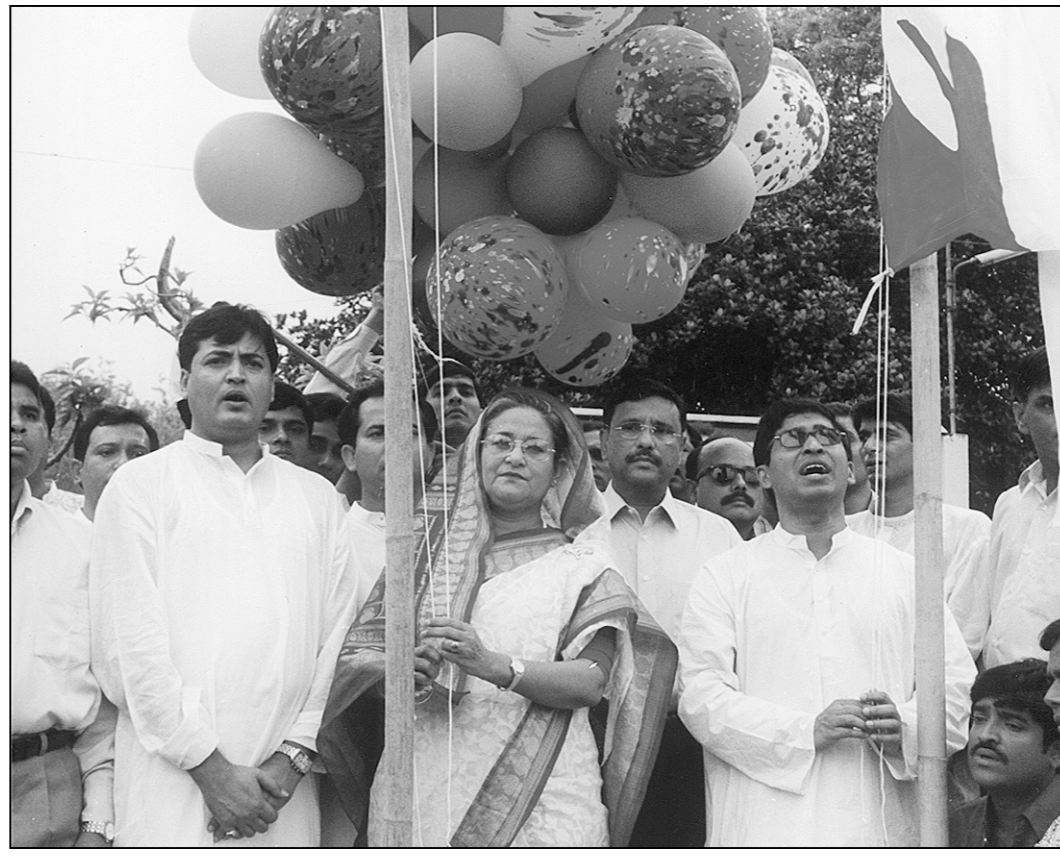
REB will spend the money for installing 4,000-kilometer transmission and distribution lines, repair and maintenance, and procuring necessary equipment.

Different aspects of the Power Reforms Bill and setting up of Energy Regulatory Commission were also discussed in the meeting.

The multilateral donor agency had long suspended financing the power sector for failure to effect necessary reforms, remove irregularities as well as reduce high system losses.

Current electricity network reportedly covers hardly over 20 per cent of the population while the vast majority of rural people still remain in the dark for lack of adequate power generation and expansion of the distribution system.

Among others, Power Secretary SM Shamsul Alam, Joint Secretary (Development) M Shah Alam, Director General of Power Cell M Moklesur Rahman and CBA general secretary of PDB M Jaful Hasan were present in the meeting.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina inaugurates the National Council of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Paltan Maidan yesterday by releasing colourful balloons.

## Govt to seek 3-yr time for CNG conversion of vehicles

UNB, Dhaka

The government plans to lodge an appeal with the High Court seeking three years time for CNG conversion of all state-owned vehicles instead of a six-month period set by it.

Official sources said the extended time for the conversion of petrol and octane-run vehicles would be sought, given all technical aspects and reality.

The conversion into compressed natural gas (CNG) depends on availability of kits and capacity of the workshop for transformation. Next come the availability of CNG for refilling.

After 17 years of monopoly by RPGCL, which converted 1,700 out of the 2,600 vehicles, now both the conversion and refilling stations have been opened for the private sector.

Rupantarita Prakitik Gas

Company Limited, a subsidiary of Petrobangla, can convert 18 vehicles a day. However, now the conversion remains suspended momentarily for want of kits.

On the other hand, private Southern Automobiles and Navana each can convert four to eight vehicles a day. The Bangladesh-China joint venture CDC also converts vehicles although it does not have the permission, officials said.

But neither government nor any private organisation works for conversion of diesel-run vehicles due to high cost and absence of its technology.

Conversion is taking place however slowly, in the country, but the experience of the converted vehicles sometimes is not good due to scarcity of CNG and inadequate number of refilling stations.

At present, there are only six CNG refilling stations. Of them, four are run by the RPGCL and two by

CDC. Officials said one station can feed 300 to 400 vehicles a day.

As the government plans to make its vehicles environment-friendly CNG-run six more stations will be set up by 2003 through floating tenders. Some 1,000 vehicles will be converted by this time.

By the year 2004, officials said, the government plans to set up 18 more CNG refilling stations mainly on the highways and convert another 5,000 vehicles.

This plan apart a Tk 345 crore five-year (2002-2006) CNG project is under consideration. It will be funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Under the project, 10,000 vehicles will be converted, while 200 CNG-run buses and 2,000 four-stroke baby-taxis will be bought. Also developed will be twenty-six refilling stations.

## Jesus' birthplace under siege

FROM PAGE 1

ated with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

An Israeli military source, who asked not to be named, said the Palestinians had opened fire on Israeli troops, and "we have tried to establish contact with them so that they can be arrested without spilling blood".

Israeli army officials said they had given strict orders not to fire at any churches. But Palestinian sources said a 39-year-old Palestinian was killed by an Israeli sniper outside the Church of the Nativity.

Michel Sabbah, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, said the Palestinians could claim sanctuary inside the church and had already laid down their arms.

A group of 200 clergymen representing all the churches in the Holy Land tried to enter the city yesterday but were turned back at a roadblock.

The Israeli army occupied the town hall across from the Nativity Church yesterday after blowing away the door, correspondents said.

They said about 20 Palestinians, including six journalists, were arrested as the Israelis took the building also housing a local television station and communications centre. Israeli radio reported 25 arrests.

In Washington, Powell repeated calls for Palestinian leader Yasser

Arafat to do more to end suicide bombings and other attacks -- which have surged in recent days -- but said Washington did not support Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's suggestion Arafat be exiled.

"Sending him into exile will just give him another place from which to conduct the same kinds of activities and give the same messages that he's giving now," Powell said on ABC's "Good Morning America" programme.

He said the deaths of scores of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings over the past six days would not advance the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council was preparing to meet in New York to discuss the spiralling violence after Israel said for the first time since the 1993 Oslo peace accords that it could send Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat into exile.

But UN Middle East peace envoy Terje Roed-Larsen said: "I think it is impossible to initiate a political or diplomatic process in the coming days."

The Israeli army released a document Tuesday, translated into English, which it said had been seized from Arafat's compound and showed a direct link between the Authority and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

It appeared to show the Brigades asking for money from Arafat's financial adviser. It said suicide

attacks cost about 145 dollars each, and asked for funds for up to nine attacks weekly.

EU foreign ministers prepared to gather for an emergency meeting later yesterday in Luxembourg, while Arab ministers are to gather in Cairo on Thursday.

But Israel quickly dismissed a call from the European Commission for an international meeting on the violence that would include representatives from the Palestinians and moderate Arab nations.

In other violence in the city yesterday, a man was killed in a shootout, a 60-year-old policeman died of wounds suffered Tuesday and militant bled to death after being shot and left in the street, Palestinian sources said.

Occasional fire from southern Lebanon, from where Israel withdrew in May 2000 after 22 years of occupation, has prompted fears the military clashes could expand to a "second front."

Israel says Iran has placed thousands of rockets in south Lebanon, where Hezbollah guerrillas attacked Israeli positions on Tuesday. Israel hit back with air raids.

Thousands of protesters who tried to march on the US embassy in Lebanon were pushed back by Lebanese police using tear gas, batons and water cannon. Dozens were injured.

## Khaleda: Blueprint

FROM PAGE 1

The AL is desperate following its isolation from the people since it lost the last general election and has asked its activists in different cities including Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna to take up criminal activities, Khaleda said, analysing the reports in the press and of the government agencies.

"Leaders and workers of the party are being organised to harbour terrorism and create anarchy at the country's industrial belts, educational institutions and in the transport sector," the prime minister said. She also added the AL move was designed to cover up its political bankruptcy and failure of leadership.

Khaleda said the same party had made abortive bids to discredit the government both at home and abroad by persecuting the country's minority population. "But the government's timely action upset the move."

"A certain quarter stationed abroad is engaged in spreading falsehood against Bangladesh and its government. They are dishing out untrue and misleading information abroad only to harm the country and its people. To this end, they are using the Internet websites and getting articles published in foreign newspapers."

She said her government was determined to maintain law and order, and has already initiated legal action against those trying to create a situation. Referring to the move to enact a fresh law to check crimes like terrorism, extortion, tender manipulation, intimidation and vandalism, she expressed the hope that the law and order would improve once the proposed law is in force.

## RMC postpones gynaecology final exam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi Medical College yesterday postponed the final examinations of the Department of Gynaecology following violence that left at least two students injured.

Also assaulted were two teachers -- Dr Mereena Khanom and Dr Fatema Begum when they came forward to tackle the situation.

Eyewitnesses said some activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) attacked an examination hall immediately after the beginning of the examination when some leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) entered the hall to sit for examinations. The JCD cadres also damaged the furniture of the hall.

While in office the AL provided its activists with many illegal arms, which the police and the BDR are now trying to recover. "If necessary, we'll call out army for the illegal arms recovery drive."

Reaffirming her government's promise to ensure public order, Khaleda said the law-enforcing agencies have necessary information about the terrorists engaged in creating a law and order situation. "Legal actions have already been initiated against the lawbreakers. We're now working to ensure public safety by establishing rule of law in the country."

The prime minister further alleged that the previous AL government unleashed terrorism and plundered public wealth instead of saving the people in the past five years. "Now they are sponsoring information terrorism."

To a question about the graft charges against the AL government, the prime minister referred to the recently published white paper and said all corrupt people of the previous regime would be punished. Asked about her election pledge to set up an independent anti-corruption commission, Khaleda said such a body would be established with honest and qualified people at the helm.

"But it would not be wise to rush into things. That's why we are taking time," she said, adding that the authorities were acting against the corrupt officials of the Bureau of Anti-corruption.

## Evil propaganda

FROM PAGE 1

strike force and rush to the place of extortion, snatching etc. in any part of the city at short notice. Members of the special task forces would be equipped with sophisticated weapons and adequate number of vehicles so that they can move easily and quickly.

The task force would be on call round the clock and its members would have no other duties.

The sources said task forces would also be formed gradually in other big cities like Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal.

Committee member Luqman Moudud Ahmed, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Education Minister Osman Faruque, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babor attended the meeting. High civil and police officials were also present.

## Shihab's father tells

FROM PAGE 1

"I was having problems with the investigating police officer, one Alamgir," Dilder said. The investigating officer (IO) was quite new in town (he was transferred to the city only a month ago) and had little idea about the Motijheel and Sabujbagh areas. "So, it was quite impossible for the IO to gather information about my son's whereabouts."

"Failing to get any co-operation even after I met the OC of Motijheel thana I went to see Ruhul Amin, additional deputy commissioner of the Detective Branch of police. And he extended all-out co-operation and helped me to take a lot of vital decisions," added Dilder.

According to his school friends, Shihab had been a friend of Liton, Raju and other 'big brothers' of his neighbourhood for more than two months before his abduction.

"He loved fast food and probably they allured my son with food to find out more about his father's financial status. In the past one month before his abduction my son would come home late on a number of days. I guess he enjoyed being with them," said Shihab's mother in tears.

"I saw Shihab often going out with some guys and taking bicycle rides which he always loved to do. I never asked him about the guys but he told me that he had been learning how to ride bicycle," said Towfiq Alam Miraj, Shihab's best friend in school. Shihab's mother also said she

had noticed her son with purse and laser torchlight weeks before his abduction. "I asked him about that but he said these were gifts from a friend."

On the day of the abduction on February 7, Shihab was supposed to be picked up by a neighbour who also has a son attending the same school. "My neighbour did not tell me that Shihab will be late home and refused to come home with her," said Shihab's mother.

"I began to worry at about 7:00pm finding that my son was not yet home. We were supposed to have dinner at my sister's house and he was still not at home. I told my husband (about that) and he started making phone calls. At about 9:00pm my husband received a call that claimed abduction of my son and we all broke down," recalled Shihab's mother.

On February 13 and 14, Shihab's family announced rewards in two national newspapers for information on his whereabouts.

Until yesterday, the police could arrest no-one having links with the murder. Shihab's first janaza was held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday at 1:00pm, while the second one was held near Shihab's house in Bashabo in the evening.

## Bahauddin Nasim

FROM PAGE 12

other filed with Madaripur thana on charge of firing gunshots on the motorcades of the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

Mohammad Dulal Uddin Akond, ASP of CID, filed a seditious case against Nasim with the CMM's Court, Dhaka, on March 11.

Mohammad Emdadul Haq, Metropolitan Magistrate, directed the officer-in-charge (OC) of Airport thana to take the complaint as a regular case and to go for legal action against the accused.

Following the order, Airport police station took the complaint as a regular case on March 12 and sent it to the CMM's court for next hearing.

Earlier, the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court rejected the bail petition of Nasim in foreign currency smuggling case.

Meanwhile, the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka on Monday extended the stay order on remand of Nasim in the case filed with Madaripur thana, till April 13.

The court passed the order following a criminal revision by the defence lawyers.

## JCD activist

FROM PAGE 12

admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH). No case was filed till writing of this report in the afternoon.

In another incident, armed terrorists belonging to 'Aziz Bahini' shot a JCD activist in Bazarchari area of Haldia union under Raozan upazila at around 10.00am yesterday. The victim was identified as Mohiuddin, 20.

Salahuddin, elder brother of Mohiuddin, said a gang of 10 terrorists including Manik, Jakir, Haroon and Alamgir of Aziz Bahini, which is now being patronised by BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, called his brother out of their house and demanded Tk 10 thousand as toll.

"As my brother refused to oblige, the terrorists shot him in the abdomen, said Shahabuddin. Mohiuddin was operated upon at CMCH yesterday noon.

## Two bills relating to environment protection passed

BSS, Dhaka

Two separate bills, one relating to environment protection and the other for setting up environment court to deal with the violators of environment protection law, were passed at the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj piloted the bill for its passage in the House.

The bills are: The Bangladesh Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2002 and the Environment Court Bill, 2002.

The Bangladesh Environment Protection Bill seeks to update the earlier law adopted in 1995 banning production, marketing and distribution of polythene shopping bags and stoppage of plying of defective vehicles emitting harmful gases.

The bill proposed a maximum punishment of ten years' imprisonment or fine of Taka 10 lakh or both for violating the law.

The Environment Court Bill, 2002 seeks to establish three environment courts, one each for Dhaka and Chittagong divisions and the third one for the rest of the country

## Malaysia detains

FROM PAGE 12 (Shikha Shastha Unnayan Karzakram), an NGO working on migrants workers, yesterday said the Bangladesh workers, detained in the Malaysian camps or working in loss-making mills/factories without payment or irregular payment, could not take the opportunity because of their inability to buy air tickets.

SHISUK demanded immediate action by the government to arrange the return of the workers through Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia.

## Dhaka condemns

FROM PAGE 12 OIC Foreign Ministers on the situation on Palestine, which was unanimously adopted by the meeting.

On the issue of terrorism Reaz Rahman underscored the need to sensitise the international community about the potential danger of identifying terrorism on religious grounds.

"It is unfortunate that the incontrovertible facts about Islam are being put to question by certain quarters due to misconception and narrowly defined interests," he said.

The state minister called for identifying the root causes of terrorism rather than only the symptoms of this phenomenon.

"The Islamic world should take the lead in advocating the need to address the root causes of terrorism rather than its symptoms," he observed.

Reaz Rahman said there should be sustained efforts for promoting dialogue and communication among different faiths, cultures and civilisations with a view to achieving peace, understanding and harmony.

He said the UN provided the best forum to bring the people of the world together to combat the menace of terrorism. The Islamic Ummah should coordinate its strategy and policy with the process of the universal body.

## Iranian couple

FROM PAGE 12 when he got down from his vehicle in front of the petrol pump to change a US\$100 note, the police said.

The attackers also kicked his wife as she came to her husband's rescue.

for speedy trial of cases relating to environment protection law.

The bill also incorporated the provision for setting up a one-member appeal court in consultation with the Bangladesh Supreme Court. A judicial officer at the level of District Judge will be appointed for the Appellate Court.

## WB clarifies report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) in a clarification to a report on the country's journalists has said that the report did not intend to characterise the entire press, or even the majority of the press as biased or dishonest.

Earlier in a report titled "Taming Leviathan: Reforming Governance in Bangladesh", the WB said Bangladeshi journalists were gradually getting involved in corruption.

However in a clarification yesterday it said it recognised the report's failure to accurately depict the severity of the pressure faced by journalists in Bangladesh today, suffering threats, assaults, torture, abductions and even murder in their efforts to uphold the truth.

It also recognised that the press was one of the most vibrant groups of the Bangladesh civil society and in many ways it had gone beyond traditional journalism to uphold its social responsibility.

The WB said the report drew attention to the extreme pressure faced by the professional media such as political threats and harassment exacerbated by a weak rule of law, and hoped to suggest means of improving the environment for a more effective and professional press in Bangladesh.

## DSE

FROM PAGE 12 joint inquiry committee to dig into the matter, a top DSE source said.

The surveillance software of the country's premier bourse has been found to be faulty, which had been generating misleading of information over the years.

The SEC on Tuesday served a show cause notice on the DSE CEO to respond within three days as to why actions would not be taken against him under Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969, for not informing SEC despite being aware of the faulty surveillance software.

## Nor'wester

FROM PAGE 12 operation before April 5.

In Kurigram, the nor'wester that lashed different upazilas claimed three lives and felled huge trees in different areas on Tuesday night.

Halima Begum, 27, wife of Ashrafal Haq of Dhularkuti village, Montu Miah, 32, son of Aysuddin of Diadanga village, and Sohrab Ali, 40, son of Goda Miah of Dakkhin Dilai village, were killed in lightning.

In Bogra, a labourer of a soap factory was killed and four others were injured when a mud-wall of the factory collapsed and fell on them during the storm at Atnarpara in the town on Tuesday night.

Faridul Islam, 24, son of Buda Pramonic of Pirganj upazila of Rangpur district, Kalu Miah, Ziaur Rahman, Minu Miah and Farook, labourers of Islam Soap Factory, were injured when the wall fell on them at midnight while they were asleep.

Of them, Faridul died on way to Dhaka. Others were admitted to Mohammad Ali Hospital.