

Laboni Khanam lost her left arm in the collapse.
PHOTO: ENAMUL HAQ

kept asking each other from time to time: 'Are you alive?' We kept calling Allah loudly. We were crying and also shouting saying 'save us', 'save us." But no one listened to our voice but we could hear other voices around us.

Some hours after I could smell Dipa's decomposed body. It had become harder to breathe. At one pint some insect managed to get in and was flying around Dipa's body and making an awful noise. It was unbearable. Whenever Sabiha and I heard other people shouting we also tried our best to shout to let them know we were alive.

Some people, probably rescuers, were asking from somewhere that, "If anyone is alive inside please make a sound." We shouted, but no one heard us, because our sound was could not reach outside. I used to see the time on my mobile. So when I realised it was evening I believed I would not survive. I started to read some verses from the Quran. I could not sleep for a moment; Sabiha took brief naps from time to time. When we had fallen silent for a while one of us would again ask: "Are you alive?' We spend whole night and the next day Thursday praying to Allah, and shouting for help. At one point, when I was felt death was imminent I started to dial some numbers of my family members from phone book of my mobile. I thought if I die, then rescuers would get my mobile and they would get these numbers easily in the dial list. So they would dial one of these numbers and then my family members would come to know about my death."

It was next evening when rescuers finally found the two although getting them out was a gruelling task.

"Rescuers later came with some equipment to create space to take me out. I told them that Sabiha was there. They brought a machine to cut the pillar, which had fallen down on my left hand. But they realised that if they cut the pillar the ceiling of the sixth floor might collapse again and Sabiha and I would both die. Then rescuers decided to cut off my left arm under the pillar to save life of both of us. Some doctors were with the rescue team, they told me that they would have to amputate my left arm. I requested them to save me without cutting off my arm, but they explained that they did not have any other option to save the two lives.

They gave me anaesthesia before cutting my left arm. But I had some sense when doctors were cutting it. I can't describe how painful it was. But just after cutting my arm I lost consciousness. When I came to I found myself lying on a bed."

Sitting on the hospital bed with one limb gone Laboni mumbles: "This disaster wouldn't have taken place if the factories were kept close after the crack developed in the pillar the day before...My life is ruined now. I pray that the lives of any other man or woman won't be ruined like us. My request to the government is to do something fore me so that I can live my life in a way that no one will be able to ignore me or hurt me the rest of my life."