

Rebels suspend

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A dozen rebel groups said in a statement late Monday that they were withdrawing from talks to prepare for the new round of negotiations in Astana.

"As these violations are continuing, the rebel factions announce... the freezing of all discussion linked to the Astana negotiations," they said.

The rebels said they "respected the ceasefire across the whole of Syria... but the regime and its allies have not stopped shooting and have launched major and frequent violations, notably in the (rebel) regions of Wadi Barada and Eastern Ghouta", near Damascus. "If things don't return to how they were before, the accord will be considered null and void," the statement added.

It was signed by a dozen groups, including the Army of Islam, Faylaq al-Sham, and the Sultan Murad Brigade, which is close to Turkey.

CRITICAL PHASE
The fighting in Wadi Barada continued yesterday, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said.

The group said government forces were attacking with helicopters and artillery fire after advancing on Monday to the outskirts of the Ain al-Fijeh spring, the main water source in the area.

Syria's government accuses rebels in Wadi Barada of deliberately targeting infrastructure there, causing fuel to poison the water supply and then cutting the flow to Damascus altogether, reports AFP. Rebels say government strikes caused the damage, which has left four million people in Damascus without water since December 22.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman warned the truce was in a "critical phase" and faced the prospect of "collapse" if sponsors Russia and Turkey did not intervene to save it.

The monitor reported violations elsewhere in the country yesterday, including air strikes on the town of Khan Sheikhan in Idlib province that killed a pregnant woman and wounded three other civilians.

JS sits

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convened the session yesterday. It will be the first JS session of this year.

The president is scheduled to deliver his speech on the first day of the session.

In his speech, the president is likely to talk about various government development activities along with other important national and international issues, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

Parliament's business advisory committee headed by Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury will finalise the duration of the session before it begins at 4:00pm, added the sources.

The previous session of the parliament ended on December 8 last year. The session had five working days.

According to the constitution, a new parliament session has to begin within 60 days of the previous one.

The 10th parliament was formed through the January 5, 2014 national election which was boycotted by the BNP-led alliance and most other political parties.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party will sit in a meeting before the upcoming session to decide party's stance on different national issues, party insiders told The Daily Star.

Boxer enrolling

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usually takes in BKSP players primarily to compete at events under its name. On meeting Monayeb, the youth had claimed that his name was Saifur Rahman Ujjal and that he was a fourth-year student and a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activist, he added. "Saifur" had since been calling him

demanding Tk 3.5 lakh and had threatened to otherwise harm Monayeb, said Mahbubur Proctor. Ali Azgar Chowdhury said they were trying to identify the youth. BCL CU unit President Alamgir Tipu said there was no such BCL man.

Rich-poor

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of Dhaka School of Economics, said the country needs political will to achieve targets set for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations.

He lauded the country's vibrant rural economy for a sustainable growth in national economy.

Gender gap has been reduced in the society but still women have lesser presence in the field of science, said Kholiqzaman, former president of the Bangladesh Economic Association.

Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, president of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, chaired the event.

IMPEACHMENT BID IN SOUTH KOREA

President Park shuns hearing

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's Constitutional Court yesterday held its first full hearing on whether to confirm the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye but she stayed away from the session.

The nine-judge court must decide whether to affirm parliament's vote on December 9 to impeach Park over a corruption scandal which has brought hundreds of thousands of protesters onto the streets every week.

Yesterday's hearing, which followed three preparatory court sessions last month, lasted only nine minutes.

The court last week ruled that Park was not required to appear for questioning. Regardless of whether Park shows up when the hearing resumes Thursday, the case will go ahead.

Her lawyers said she was unlikely to attend future hearings.

Park has been suspended from executive duties and the country is being temporarily led by Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn.

The Constitutional Court has up to six months to decide whether to confirm Park's impeachment. If it does, a presidential election must be held within two months.

Park is accused of colluding with close friend Choi Soon-Sil to coerce big companies into handing over nearly \$70 million to dubious foundations which Choi controlled and allegedly plundered.

Choi -- dubbed South Korea's "Rasputin" due to her influence over the president -- is now on trial for coercion and abuse of power and her daughter has been detained in

For bringing smile

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why she has extended her support to such children. "It is not easy to look at a child who has just gone through chemotherapy or a spinal injection. It is heart wrenching. Their pain became our strength."

From their firsthand experience they have learnt that not all families need financial support, but each one of them does need emotional support.

They need people to share their pain, sit beside their sick children and hold them with love and warmth so that they get encouragement and strength to carry on fighting.

The young women, who share similar empathy for these children and their parents, met at the Active Citizens Programme of British Council.

"We knew that we wanted to do something for the welfare of children. It took us months to prepare the whole plan. We are still learning every day," Sumaiya says.

The unusual effort of this group did not go unnoticed by Prof Md Afiquil Islam, former chairman of the paediatrics haematology and oncology department of BSMMU. He came forward with his generous support. He trained the young team to communicate and interact with the children and to embrace the pain of their parents.

While specialised doctors are providing medical care, this team plays an important role by helping parents cope with the stress of caregiving while motivating the children to not give up.

"This emotional support is as important as medical treatment. Besides, cancer affected children can

be cured. You will find families who don't know how to handle this scary disease; they don't know how to comfort their sick children. On the other hand, these kids need someone to sit beside them, to chat with them, to engage them in games and conversation.

"I think this young group is doing a great job," says Prof Islam.

In the last two years, For a Bit of Smile has provided counseling, emotional assistance and financial aid for medicines to 300 children suffering from cancer. Besides, they have raised Tk 1.5 lakh for the treatment of two children. The number of volunteers has increased from 5 to 40 who joined the journey to help cancer afflicted children in BSMMU.

Dilip Das, father of four-year-old Diponto, says his daughter could survive mainly because of the financial support from the organisation. "I am a wage earner. It is difficult for me to run my family with the meager amount I earn. It wouldn't be possible for me to pay for such expensive treatment."

For a Bit of Smile is helping him through counseling him and giving financial support, Dilip said, adding that, "I am eternally grateful to them."

The team has also built a small play area in the corner of the ward, where volunteers engage children in games and activities. Their goal is to bring smiles to the faces of children suffering, and they hope to get more volunteers through spreading words of their noble endeavour.

To become a volunteer and donate, please contact Sumaiya Ali (ph: 01816314665).

PM travels

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inter-ministerial meeting was held at the foreign ministry yesterday with Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque in the chair.

The meeting discussed about the visit of the PM to India likely in early February.

Foreign ministry sources said in Davos, the PM would address a number of sessions of the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting and hold bilateral meetings with several world leaders on the side-line.

The sources said the 47th annual meeting of the WEF would focus on five critical leadership challenges in 2017: strengthening global collaboration, restoring a sense of shared identity, revitalising economic growth, reforming capitalism and preparing for the "Fourth Industrial Revolution".

For the first time, a Chinese president, Xi Jinping, will attend the annual meeting.

The co-chairs of the meeting will be Brian T. Moynihan of Bank of America, documentary filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Helle Thorning-Schmidt of Save the Children International, Frans van Houten of Royal Philips and Meg Whitman of Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, singer and songwriter and education advocate Shakira, and artist and social activist Forest Whitaker will be awarded with the 2017 Crystal Awards in recognition of their leadership as artists in improving the state of the world at a special session and concert on January 16.

Flirting

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the train was moving, it was not possible to monitor the railway track. Train might derail anytime due to the poor condition of the bridge.

Abdul Karim Kim, convener of Songkhubdo Nagorik Andolon in Sylhet, said the railway bridge has become unsafe for train movement as many wooden sleepers have been damaged.

He called upon the railway authorities to repair the bridge immediately to avoid any accidents.

Ali Azam, senior deputy assistant engineer of Sreemangal Railway Station, said they were worried about the condition of Monu Railway Bridge. They appointed a permanent maintenance staff for monitoring the bridge.

Abdur Rahman, maintenance staff of the bridge, said if they found any fault on the bridge, they repaired it.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Mujibur Rahman, assistant executive engineer of Bangladesh Railway in Sylhet division, said they could not replace the damaged wooden sleepers as there was a shortage of wooden sleepers.

He said they had informed the higher authorities about the matter, but did not get any response from them in this regard yet.

He, however, claimed that there was no risk of train movement on the bridge.

Most secure

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It features the national flora of the UK's four countries emerging from a coronet.

Dr Kevin Clancy, director of the Royal Mint Museum, said: "This year we also mark the achievements of Jane Austen, Sir Isaac Newton and The Royal Flying Corps -- all pioneers in their own field.

"The British public should start to see these coins appearing in their change from spring 2017."

A new £2 coin has been created that displays a First World War biplane and is marked, "The War In The Air".

It commemorates the personnel of the Royal Flying Corps who risked their lives to innovate in air combat and push the limits of what was possible in aviation.

Austen, the celebrated author of Pride and Prejudice and other novels, is also remembered with a special £2 coin, which marks the 200th anniversary of her death.

When the new polymer £5 notes were released an artist created tiny engravings of the writer, alongside quotes from her work, on four notes, which are believed to be worth tens of thousands of pounds each as a result.

Sir Isaac Newton, a former master of the Royal Mint, is remembered on the new 50p coin.

The Mint said the famous scientist was "renowned for his zeal in tackling counterfeiters, improving assaying techniques and refining weights and measures to an exacting standard".

Schoolgirl 'gang-raped'

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Her 16-year-old friend took her to his friend's house in Kalabagan area where the three teenage boys committed the crime, he added.

Two of the accused are from Char Madhupur village while the other is from Kalabagan, he said.

The victim underwent treatment at Pabna Medical College Hospital and she has been sent home after the doctors there conducted a medical examination on her, he said, adding that although the report of the examination is yet to be available, all signs and evidence indicate that it was an apparent case of rape.

Father of the girl filed a case with Pabna Police Station on Monday afternoon accusing the three arrestees.

NO ARREST IN GARO GIRL GANG RAPE CASE

Three days into the incident, police are yet to arrest any accused in the Garo school girl gang rape case in Haluaghat upazila, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

The 13-year old victim passed JSC examination from a local high school this year. She is currently undergoing treatment at

Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Kamrul Islam Miah, officer-in-charge of Haluaghat Police Station.

Police are conducting raids to arrest the criminals at the earliest, he said, adding that the victim's father lodged a case with the police station on Sunday mentioning two individuals named Ramzan Ali and Shafuiddin alias Gesu.

Quoting doctors at the hospital, the OC said, signs of rape were primarily found and an examination was conducted on Monday.

The police are yet to receive the test report, he added.

On her way to attend an annual performance of kirtan (devotional song) organised by local Garo community, Ramzan and Shafuiddin allegedly waylaid and raped the young girl in Gubrakura village of the upazila on the night of December 31 (Saturday).

She was initially admitted to Haluaghat Upazila Health Complex on Sunday in a critical state and she was transferred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital the same night as her condition deteriorated, police said.

DCC market

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DNCC, fire department and market authorities responsible for the fire and the loss inflicted by it.

The market was always claustrophobic without cross ventilation, Anis Gofran said. Abnormal heat used to generate inside it for lack of air circulation.

"Had the fire incident happened during day time casualties would have been huge because of its large number of regular customers," Anis said.

DNCC Market Bebohashay Samity Joint Secretary Akhtaruzzaman claimed they had some extinguishers and seven security people.

The two-storey market had 543 shops built in the 1960s. In 2006, the then Dhaka City Corporation took steps to construct a 20-storey city trade centre on seven-bigha plot demolishing the market.

DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq said the city corporation could not control the market even if it wanted as there are many associations of owners and they are powerful.

"It is not easy to handle that."

LEGAL COMPLICATION

There persists a long-time legal dispute between the city corporation and shop owners, which began in 2006 after the then city corporation, without involving the shop owners, went for a deal with Amin Association Overseas Ltd for constructing a multi-storey trade centre.

The traders and owners of the market filed several cases against the move at the time and the legal battle is still on.

The existing market and the vast car parking space in front are earmarked in the layout of Gulshan Model Town. But the project would have taken up the entire open

space for the trade centre.

Amin Association was supposed to implement the project but failed to even start the work due to legal complication.

The 20-storey City Trade Centre was supposed to be built on a seven-bigha plot occupied by the DCC Market and its car park. There was supposed to be a three-layer underground car park at the site.

Amin Association would get 73 percent ownership of the total saleable area, according to the agreement made with the then DCC in 2006, which was then revised to 67 percent in 2010, said an official of DNCC.

However, the city corporation failed to hand over the land to Amin Association.

Market Bebohashay Samity leader Akhtaruzzaman said the shop owners had filed two cases against the move as they demanded an assurance of getting back their shops.

The authority didn't sit with them before going for the tender to construct the trade centre, which was why they filed the cases, he said, adding that five lakh people were involved with the market and they were ignored.

In a recent meeting with DNCC, the shop owners demanded shops and compensation during the construction period. DNCC did not sit with them later, Akhtaruzzaman said.

Against the backdrop, Sher Mohammad, president of DNCC Kacha Market Businessmen's Association, said, "We are sure that this [the fire] was an act of sabotage."

Mayor Annisul termed the deal "unequal and against public interest."

"We will scrutinise the deal to revise it," he told The Daily Star.

5.5 Tripura quake jolts

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kilometres northeast of Ambasa region of neighbouring Tripura. The Indian Met Department said the intensity of the quake was 5.7 on the Richter scale as recorded by them.

Syed Humayun Akhter, a professor of department of geology at Dhaka University, said the epicentre was at Ambasa, 59 km from Agartala, capital of Tripura state, 170 kilometres east-northeast of Dhaka and originated at a depth of 36 kilometres.

He said the tremor lasted for a maximum of 10 seconds. Dhaka city dwellers felt the tremor around 3:09pm. The tremors initially felt were small followed by some strong ones before dying out.

People began to panic when the tremors began and many people were seen rushing outside when the earthquake jolted the country. Indian media NDTV reported that tremors were felt across Assam and the Northeast.

Our Sylhet correspondent reported that the tremor caused huge damage in Kamalganj upazila in Moulvibazar and an elderly person died of shock at Jagannathpur upazila in Sunamganj.

The tremors here originated around 40km south of Kamalganj upazila in Moulvibazar.

Locals said the tremor caused damages to the land, roads and buildings of the upazila.

Many roads of the upazila including Kumrakapon area were broken, cracks appeared in cropland cracked and soil liquefaction occurred in some places to some extent, Md Rafiqur Rahman, upazila chairman of Kamalganj, said.

He said the jolt caused cracks in the newly constructed upazila auditorium and a three storied restaurant building at Shamshegar of the upazila.

"We are working to repair all the damage in the upazila," Rahman

said.

Meanwhile, an elderly man, Hiron Miah, 60, son of late Sunu Miah of Asampur village in the upazila, died.

Mirza Ali Khan, duty doctor of Jagannathpur Upazila Health Complex, said the elderly man died of shock.

Last year, a research study suggested that a massive fault could trigger a cataclysmic earthquake beneath Bangladesh, parts of east India and Myanmar.

The hidden fault buried under miles of river sediment could cause an earthquake of magnitude 8.2 to 9.0 in this densely populated region.

The researchers estimate that about 140 million people who live within 60 miles (100 kilometers) of the fault, including the 17 million people who live in the crammed megalopolis of the greater Dhaka area in Bangladesh are at risk from this.

Bangladesh's

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strengthen its efforts on security front.

He said a number of high-level visits -- President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and State Minister levels -- will take place in 2017 to strengthen Bangladesh's relations with the external world.

Responding to another question, he said Bangladesh will take the advantage of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) having its secretariat in Bangladesh.

"We'll try to strengthen our relations with Bimstec member states. Regional connectivity and security cooperation are absolutely on top of the agenda," he said.

On manpower export market, the state minister said some 749,249 people went abroad in 2016 and got jobs there while the number was 555,881 in 2015.

জাহাঙ্গীরনগর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

সভার, ঢাকা। তারিখ: ০৩-০১-২০১৭ইং

“বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় দিবস- ২০১৭” উদযাপন সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি
সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য সিভিকিট সভায় গৃহীত সিদ্ধান্তের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বর্গাচ্য আয়োজনের মধ্য দিয়ে “বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় দিবস- ২০১৭” উদযাপনের সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়েছে। এ উপলক্ষে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ক্যাম্পাসে আগামী ১২ ও ১৩ জানুয়ারি ২০১৭ দুই দিনব্যাপী নিম্নলিখিত কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ করা হয়েছেঃ

তারিখ	সময় ও স্থান	কর্মসূচিসমূহ
১২-০১-২০১৭ বৃহস্পতিবার	সকাল ১০:০০টা	জাতীয় পতাকা এবং বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পতাকা উত্তোলন, বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় দিবস ২০১৭ এর শুভ উদ্বোধন ঘোষণা
	স্থান	বিজনেস স্টাডিজ অনুষ্ণদ চত্বর
	সকাল ১১:০০টা	সিনেমা প্রদর্শনী, স্থান : জহির রায়হান মিলনায়তন
	বিকাল ৩:০০টা	পুতুল নাচ
	সন্ধ্যা ৫:০০টা	নাটক ও নাট্যতত্ত্ব বিভাগের উদ্যোগে নাটক
	সন্ধ্যা ৭:০০টা	ফানুস উড়ানো
	স্থান	ছাত্র-শিক্ষক কেন্দ্র/সেলিম আল দীন মুক্তমঞ্চ
১৩-০১-২০১৭ শুক্রবার	সকাল ৯:৩০টা হতে দিনব্যাপী	প্রাণামনাই ডে মিলন মেলা
		আনন্দ শোভাযাত্রা (বিজনেস স্টাডিজ অনুষ্ণদ চত্বর থেকে শুরু)
		২য় ব্যাচে ভর্তিকৃত শিক্ষার্থীদের সর্বস্বর্না আলোচনা
		মধ্যাহ্নভোজ
		স্মৃতিচারণ
		সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান
		রায়সে ড্র
		সেলিম আল দীন মুক্তমঞ্চ

এছাড়াও শিশুদের জন্য খেলা ও বিশেষ আয়োজন থাকবে। সময় পরে নির্ধারণ করা হবে।

প্রাণামনাই ডে মিলন মেলায় রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফিঃ অংশগ্রহণকারী নিজে- ৫০০/-, স্বামী/স্ত্রী- ৫০০/-, সন্তান জনপ্রতি- ৩০০/-, অন্যান্য- ৩০০/- টাকা এবং বর্তমান ছাত্র-ছাত্রী- ৩০০/- টাকা।

রেজিস্ট্রেশন স্পটঃ ঢাকা শহরের নিম্নোক্ত কয়েকটি স্পটে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় দিবস ২০১৭ উপলক্ষে প্রাণামনাই ডে মিলন ও মেলায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য রেজিস্ট্রেশন করা হবে। স্থান ও কন্টাক্ট পারসনের নাম নিম্নে দেয়া হলো :

- ঢাকা কলেজ : মোঃ মোয়াজ্জেম হোসেন মোস্তা (০১৮১৯২২৩৫০), সাইদুলজামান লিটন (০১৭৫১৯৯৬১১), ড. রেজাউল করিম (০১৭১১৬৪১১৮), বাংলামটর : আলতাফ বিশ্বাস (০১৭১৫৬১৮৬২), প্রানার্স টাওয়ার, সুইট ৭-৮, ১৫ তলা, বাংলামটর; ডায়েফেডিল ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ইউনিভার্সিটি : মামুন রফিক (০১৭১১৪১০৯৩, ০১৭১০৪৯৩১৭১), ইমতিয়াজ ইকরাম (০১৭১১৭০৬৩৩), ড. মোঃ ফকর হোসেন (০১৭১০৪৯৩২৫৭); উত্তরা : HOUSE NO-20, LAKE DRIVE ROAD, 5TH FLOOR, DALAS FASHIONS LTD., SECTOR-7 জুলফিকার (০১৭১০৩০১৫০১), সেন্টু (০১৭১৬৭৬৭৮৭), কাজল (০১৭১১০৯০৯০৭); গুলশান : পূর্ণিমা রেজোরা, গুলশান ১নং গোল চত্বর, আনোয়ার হোসেন বেলু (০১৮১৯২২৬০৯১), সৈয়দা নাজমা পারভিন (পাপড়ি) (০১৭১৫০২৭৪২২), মোহাঃ হাজ্জার বিন মাহফুজ (নিশান) (০১৯৫৫৫০২১০২); শাহীন ফুল ও কলেজ : গ্রুপ ক্যান্টেন আমিরুল আহসান, অধ্যক্ষ বি.এফ. শাহীন কলেজ (০১৭১০৪২৪১২১), কে এম রাশেদুল হাসান মাসুম (০১৮১৯৮২৭৫৭০); মিরপুর : গ্রামীণ পোষাক, পুট-৩৫, রোড-৪, ব্রুক-এফ, সেকশন-১, মিরপুর, শুভাশীষ ভৌমিক (০১৭১২২২০২০), অসলিম চৌধুরী (০১৮১৯২২৬৬২৫); মতিঝিল : গুয়াহাটীজামান (ডিজিএম, অক্ষী ব্যাংক) (০১৭১২৩০৮৭০), ইব্রাহিমুল্লাহ তালুকদার লেবু (ডিজিএম, অক্ষী ব্যাংক) (০১৭১৫১০৮১২), রোকন সিদ্দিকী (০১৭১৫৪৫২৯১), আশীষ কুমার মজুমদার (০১৭২৭৪১২৭২৭); মালিবাগ-মগবাজার-শাহীনপাড়া : রিয়াজ উস সেলিম (০১৯৭২৪৪৫২০২৩); আসাদশেট-মোহাম্মদপুর: সুবর্ণী সেলিম (০১৯৮৭১৪৭০০৩) সুলুকি কবি হাউজ গ্রাউন্ড ফোর, ফ্যামিলি গ্লার্স, মিরপুর রোড, ঢাকা; ধানমন্ডি : মোঃ মাকসুদুর রহমান, ম্যাগাজিন, এইচএলবিসি ব্যাংক, ধানমন্ডি শাখা, ধানমন্ডি। (০১৭৪৪১৩৩৩৩); গ্লোটার মামুনসিঃ ইব্রাহিমুল্লাহ তালুকদার লেবু (০১৭১৫১০৮১২), মহম্মদ হোসেন খান, করোনেশন ড্রামাটিক ক্লাব, ভিক্টোরিয়া রোড, টাঙ্গাইল (০১৭১৫০২০১৫৬), এবিএম সেলিম (০১৯৭৬৭