

## Senior citizen

FROM PAGE 20

"The certificates would enable the elderly to receive priorities in public and private places, including transports, offices, hospitals, etc," Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haque Mostafa Shaheed told journalists yesterday.

The minister was addressing a report-launch programme at the Social Services Department auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

Titled "Ageing in the 21st century: A celebration and a challenge", the report was jointly published by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and HelpAge International.

Replying to a query, the minister said it would not be possible to lower the age threshold to be considered elderly from 65 to 60 because of poor economic conditions.

Currently, the country has over 10 million people aged 65 or above.

Ranjit Kumar Biswas, social welfare secretary, said a 28-member committee had already been formed to formulate guidelines for issuing senior citizen certificates.

Out of 15 countries with a population of over 10 million elderly people, seven are developing countries, the report said.

About Bangladesh, it said the elderly population here will comprise 10 percent of the total population by 2026, which would create pressure on socio-economic factors and slacken the pace of development.

The International Day of Older Persons was observed across the world yesterday, including Bangladesh.

## AL blames

FROM PAGE 1

houses of the Buddhist communities to get first-hand impression of the situation.

Hanif would apprise the premier of the situation today after her arrival from the USA.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Md. Moinuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday said the government has information relating to Rohingyas' involvement in the Ramu and Chittagong violence.

"We are already informed of the Rohingyas' link with the violence," the minister said while talking to reporters after inaugurating a training programme at Armed Police Battalion headquarters in the capital.

Moinuddin said law enforcers had arrested 93 people in Cox's Bazar and 73 in Chittagong till yesterday morning in connection with the violence.

The law enforcers had been asked to keep vigil in areas where Rohingya refugee camps are situated, he said.

They had been instructed to restrict movement of Rohingyas within the camps so that they cannot contact with local people, he added.

"The government will take stern action under the existing laws against the fundamentalists if they try to spark communal violence," he told the newsmen.

**AL DELEGATION IN RAMU**

During their visit, the AL delegates urged people to maintain the country's longstanding social harmony at any cost and remain alert to the danger of such incidents happening again.

They held a meeting with the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, and exchanged views with people from all walks of life.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hanif said, "We went to the spot on orders of the prime minister, and we will brief her about the visit tomorrow."

The AL joint general secretary also said the violence had been committed in Ramu 41 years after the country's independence.

It resembles the mayhem carried out by Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators in 1971, he added.

Hanif said they had assured the victims of all out cooperation with full compensation for repairing the temple and houses.

The other members of the delegation were, among others, AL leaders Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Aminul Islam Amin.

## Please save

FROM PAGE 1

defeated."

The Mohathero slowly walked into the Sima monastery yesterday afternoon, supported by his disciples. He went from one pagoda to another, and looked at the defaced, damaged statues of Lord Buddha and the nobles in a state of stupor.

He was sweating. He was shaking in pain and exasperation. And he spoke in his gentle, quaint voice.

The Bangalees who had taken refuge in his monastery invented a trick to evade

the Pakistan army.

"I am a China Buddhist," they would tell the Pakistan army when intercepted. When Bangladesh was at war, China sided with Pakistan. This is why the Pakistan army had great respect for anyone affiliated with China. A China Buddhist was a respectable person and so was to be spared persecution.

"The Pakistanis did not torch our village. This attack is totally out of the blue," Mohathero says. "This is an

attack on my religion. I have no foes."

And yet he had to run for his life. When the mob attacked his monastery, his disciples held him on both sides, lifted him off the ground and carried him into the paddy field. That is where he hid the night and survived.

"My civilisation is lost. My lifetime of worshipping has gone in vain. I am a lost man and lost I will be," he says.

"Please save my future generation! Please!"

## Govt fuelled Ramu violence

FROM PAGE 20

Judicial probe committee headed by a neutral judge to probe the atrocities carried out against the minority community and mete out exemplary punishment to the perpetrators of the crime.

The BNP leader was addressing a meeting of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), pro-BNP student body, at a hotel in the capital's Nayapaltan.

Home Minister Md. Moinuddin Khan Alamgir on Sunday accused local BNP lawmaker Lutfur Rahman of inciting the violence, saying the MP neither met the visiting team from the capital nor visited the victims.

Fakhrul questioned how the minister came to the conclusion that the opposition was involved in the mayhem even before any investigation into the matter has been instituted.

He also claimed that the BNP lawmaker (Cox's Bazar-3) tried his best to stop the violence.

Incensed apparently by a Facebook posting of a photo defaming the holy Quran, a mob destroyed 12 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 50 houses in Ramu upazila of Cox's Bazar late on Saturday night.

BNP FORMS INQUIRY COMMITTEE

The main opposition BNP yesterday formed an inquiry committee to investigate the

communal violence in Cox's Bazar, said a release signed by Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, joint secretary general of the party.

Party's senior leader Moudud Ahmed MP will lead the eight-member committee that includes standing committee member Abdul Majeen Khan, Vice-chairman Abdullah Al Noman, chairperson's adviser Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Joint Secretary General Salauddin Ahmed, Organising Secretary (Chittagong) Golam Akbar Khanda, central committee member Goutam Chakraborty and Prof Sukomol Barua of Dhaka University.

JAMAAT REACTION

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday demanded arrest of Uttam Kumar Barua, the Buddhist who had published photos in facebook and hurt the religious sentiment of Muslims. The Islamist party also condemned the subsequent attack on minority communities, and the vandalism and torching of Buddhist and Hindu temples and houses in Ramu and nearby areas on Saturday night.

In a statement signed by the party's acting secretary general Shafiqur Rahman, Jamaat yesterday said they suspected that some leaders of the incumbent government were attempting to implicate Jamaat with the violence.

The statistics compiled by the health, interior and defence ministries showed that 182 civilians, 88 police and 95 soldiers were killed in attacks in September.

Another 683 people were wounded -- 453 civilians, 110 police and 120 soldiers, according to the figures.

Jamaat never commits vile and dastardly acts like the assault on the people of minority community and torching their temples and houses," said the statement.

The party demanded an impartial and fair probe, and exemplary punishment to the instigator and the people involved in the violence.

## Sept was deadliest month in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

September was the deadliest month in Iraq in more than two years, with 365 people killed in violence that Iraqi security forces are struggling to curb, official figures released yesterday showed.

Insurgents are regarded as weaker than when violence reached its peak in 2006 and 2007, but they remain capable of carrying out mass-casualty attacks across Iraq.

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## 166 detained

FROM PAGE 1

people in connection with the violence.

Dipananda Bhikkhu, priest of Kolagaon Sarbojanin Ratnangkara Buddha Bihar, which was set on fire on Sunday, lodged one of the cases with Patiya Police Station accusing 37 persons by name and around 500 unknown persons.

Of the cases in Cox's Bazar, six were lodged with Ramu, four with Ukhia, two with Teknaf and one with Sadar police stations, Babul Akther, additional superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar, told The Daily Star.

Law enforcers were reported to have been raiding different places in Cox's Bazar to detain more people involved in the sectarian attack.

State Minister for LGDR and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Joint General Secretary of the ruling Awami League Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday visited Ramu Kendriya Shima Bihar in the afternoon. Bir Bahadur, lawmaker from Bandarban, was also present with them.

Meanwhile, Western Marine Shipyard remained

closed yesterday following the arrest of 25 sub-contractors in connection with Saturday night's violence.

During a visit yesterday, The Daily Star found the Buddhist community of four upazilas in Cox's Bazar district passing time in panic owing to the last two days' violence in the region.

Although Section 144 has been imposed and law enforcement agencies, including the army, have been patrolling the sensitive areas, local residents still seemed to be reeling from the violence.

On Saturday night, protesters attacked seven temples in Ramu. Some of these temples were damaged extensively.

Locals claimed that around 2,000 people participated in the attack and no police were there during the time. The protesters used gunpowder and petrol during the attack.

Maj Gen Sabbir Ahmed, general officer commanding (GOC) of Chittagong Cantonment, said the army had set up camp in the area. He said army troops would stay there until the situation calmed down completely.

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## No corrupt culture

FROM PAGE 20

The seat became vacant after Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj, her brother and former AL lawmaker, had resigned from parliament in July.

"I will also keep an eye on the leaders who in absence of Sohel Taj had indulged in various irregularities," said Rimi.

Asked why members of Tajuddin family keep resigning from parliament, she said, adding, "I will pursue the government to connect the union with the national grid."

Rimi said she wanted to work in consultation with all, regardless of who voted her or not, and build good relations with everybody. She would also try to reduce the gap with some. And as of Sohel's case, it would be better to ask him. I cannot speak on his behalf,"

Hanif said they had assured the victims of all out cooperation with full compensation for repairing the temple and houses.

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she replied.

She said although she had only a year to work she would try her best for the betterment of the Kapasia people. "My priority will be to repair the roads in the constituency and construct new roads where there is none."

Besides, the Barisabon union in Kapasia has no electricity connection till date, she said, adding, "I will pursue the government to connect the union with the national grid."

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"Baba [Tajuddin] had resigned as a minister, but not from the party. My Uncle [Afsaruddin] also did the same. And as of Sohel's case, it would be better to ask him. I cannot speak on his behalf,"

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one," she sounded determined.

Rimi said she had taken the matter of ensuring women's access to health service as a challenge. She vowed to make this happen.

She also pledged to be with the Kapasia people whether she remains as an MP or not.

The new Kapasia lawmaker said she would not forget the grassroots-level leaders and activists after winning the election like other politicians.

"I have a plan to introduce some mechanisms so that the grassroots-level leaders can share their views with their leaders whenever they want to," said Rumi, adding that at present the leaders can speak only in the party forum.

"I will behave well with all and do no injustice to any-

## Of Black Saturday

FROM PAGE 1

Muslims came and tried to restrain them, in vain. The Bihar went up in flames and Nidarshan slipped into the betel nut garden and hid himself.

9:00pm

College student Anik Barua was at the upazila complex after finishing his computer lessons at a shop close by. He saw a procession marching towards Chaumuhoni station.

"Slap the Buddhists",

"Burn them down" -- the slogans reverberated through the street. Anik followed them to the square. He was baffled as to why they wanted to kill the Buddhists. Then he asked a Muslim boy whom he knew about what was going on. The boy told him about a Buddhist man who had posted something on Facebook that hurt Islam.

5:00pm

Scared, Anik rushed home. He told his family members to stay home.

Then came the first wave of attack; and then the second wave. The mob did not do much other than battering up a few houses. Anik was relieved. He thought it was over. But he was wrong. The third wave came in a much bigger and fiercer form. They torched down houses and the Bihar.

5:30pm

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