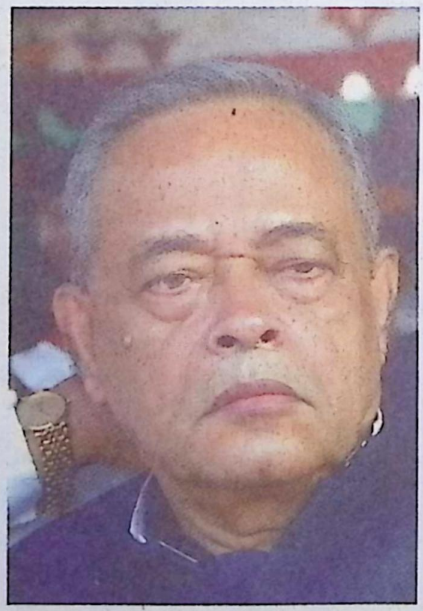
Out of Touch

As one strike after the other is crippling the country, the government, it seems, is a little out of touch with the ground reality

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Principal Mozammel Haque Sarker, chairman of Kazipur Upazila Parishad of Sirajganj, believes that the government, in its final year of office, will not be able to take the necessary steps to keep the political situation under control. In his analysis, the prevailing political situation will be worsened day by day and the opposition parties will take advantages of it.

Mozammel, also vice-president of Kazipur Upazila unit of Awami League, has made the remark at the beginning of March while talking to this correspondent. He has relied on his political experience and wisdom to make the comment. His remarks and assessment proved right on March 11 when police, on the directive of Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, entered the BNP's central office, broke down doors, "recovered" explosives and arrested 157 leaders and workers. The police claimed they did it to "ensure public safety and security of the police."



Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir

There was no doubt that policemen crossed the limit that day. Some senior ruling Awami League leaders even criticised the police actions. But the Home Minister openly claimed that police arrested "criminals". It is also interesting that the police, faced with severe criticism, also later released three senior BNP leaders Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Sadek Hossain Khoka and Altaf Hossain Chowdhury. The three leaders were labeled as "criminals" by the home minister, but were released the next day, proving the police actions unjust.

The home ministry however could not change its character. The ministry on March 13 came up with a press note justifying the police's actions blindly as it did in the past to defend all wrongdoings of the police.

The press note put all the blame on the BNP leaders and activists who gathered at a rally on March 11 in front of the party office. As per the press note, the unruly BNP men exploded eight to 10 homemade bombs, went on a rampage by creating obstacles in the streets, set fire to rickshaw vans, threw brick chips and stones towards nearby buildings and damaged public properties and threw homemade bombs and brickbats at the police.

Not only that, according to the press note, a number of homemade bombs were thrown at the policemen from BNP central office, forcing law enforcement agencies to conduct a search inside the party office to capture the culprits. During the search, police recovered 10 homemade bombs and arrested leaders and workers for their alleged involvement in destructive activities, described the press note.

But the press note did a blunder by citing an incident that took place on March 1, 2004 when the police in a similar fashion barged into the Awami League office at Bangabandhu Avenue, mercilessly beat than opposition men and recovered some homemade bombs from the AL office. It said that the bombs recovered earlier from other places were shown to AL chief Sheikh Hasina and she was told that those were hurled from the AL office.

By citing the incident of 2004, the home ministry tried to portray how the then BNP-Jamaat led government abused police force against the opposition parties. But it did not serve the purpose. Mentioning the incident rather proved that the culture of abusing police force has not changed. The present AL-led government is doing what the past BNP-led government did in 2001-2006.

What did the government achieve from police