But the AL did not take any step to that effect. The ministers' announcement also exposed how the government has been using the police administration for its political purpose. That is against the ruling AL's electoral pledges--the charter for change. That promised: "In order to provide security to every citizen of the country, police and other law enforcing agencies will be kept above political influence."

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance 1976 empowers the police commissioner to prohibit any assembly or procession whenever and for so long as he considers such prohibition to be necessary for the preservation of the public peace or safety. The prohibition order imposed by the DMP boss can remain in force for a month. If he wants to continue more than a month, in that case he needs the government's sanction.

The DMP did not issue any such order till May 21. Moreover, the announcement has embarrassed the DMP officials as they are facing a volley of questions about it.

Muhidduin Khan Alamgir's home ministry also did not issue any circular. Officials of the ministry said they were not aware of any such announcement.



Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir

Then what will happen in the coming days? Will any opposition party, particularly the BNP-led 18 party alliance be denied to hold rallies in line with the ministers' announcement? Will the DMP boss be able to perform his duties independently to judge the situation before rejecting the opposition alliance's application seeking permission for holding meetings or rallies? The announcement has put the DMP in a difficult situation. It may further jeopardise its neutrality and image. Their duties are to ensure people's safety. But people may lose confidence in them if they try to honour the ministers' whimsical announcement. Whom should they serve– a political party or the people? Who pays for the police- a political party or people?

The announcement has also exposed the government's narrow political motive. The next one month is very crucial in the political landscape. After one and half a month, Ramadan will begin. Then Eid will be celebrated. Then the rainy season will begin. The BNP-led opposition alliance will not be able to wage any strong street agitation during the month of Ramadan and also at least one week before and after the Ramadan. And during the rainy season, waging street agitation may not be possible. From the month of September, the bell of the next parliamentary election will be ringing. As per the constitution, the polls will be held any time in between October this year to January next year.

So, if the main opposition BNP is not allowed to wage any street agitation for next one month in the capital, the government will have some level of comfort. Intensifying street agitation means increase in violent political activities which will contribute to deepening the on going political crisis. That may mount pressure on the government to negotiate with the main opposition BNP to settle the dispute over the mode of the election time government. Considering all these aspects, one may consider the government policymakers quite clever!

But the reason cited by the home minister is not justified. Imposing a ban on political meetings and rallies can never be the way to fight anarchy. Rather the government should resolve the political crisis and the risk of anarchy will go away. If the government wants to prevent anarchy by banning meetings and rallies, it should ban politics, as the major problem the country is now facing is political in nature. So, the path to solve political problems politically is the wise way out. The other path is the stupid one--banning politics altogether, which is what military rulers did in the past.

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