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Jalil draws flak from party colleagues

Hasina comes to his rescue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday drew flak from his senior party colleagues over the April 30 deadline for unseating the government, hours before the much-hyped date fell flat.

But AL President Sheikh Hasina came to his rescue and said the issue could be discussed later, as some AL Central Working Committee

(ALCWC) members sought clarification from their general secretary at an emergency meeting at the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Meeting sources quoted Jalil as telling frontline leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Suranjit Sengupta that there might be some mistakes in the antigovernment movement against what the opposition claims is the coalition's

failure to clean up corruption and crime.

Jalil, who set the April 30 deadline on an instruction from Hasina, sought advice from the AL leaders on pressing ahead with the anti-government demonstration.

The ALCWC meeting in the final hours to the deadline was short-lived, but the sources hinted at a blow-by-blow discussion on the issue on May 5, a day before Hasina leaves Bangladesh for the US.

Yesterday's meeting decided that the AL would stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow to protest mass arrests and demand immediate release of the people police arrested in an eight-day dragnet to quell antigovernment tempers.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Kader told The Daily Star that the meeting formed a committee with AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad as its chief to lay out programmes to celebrate the recognition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the greatest Bangalee of all time by the listeners of BBC Bangla Service Radio.

Hasina and her colleagues will visit Tungipara, the birthplace of Bangabandhu, to place a wreath at his graveyard on May 3.

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Deadline failed, not movement, says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party would topple the present government through a mass movement in the shortest possible time to free people from repressive rule and pave the way for snap polls.

Apparently admitting failure of the AL's April 30 deadline to unseat the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government, she said, "You may say the deadline has failed, but the movement has not."

Addressing a crowded press conference at the AL central office, Hasina said the deadline her party gave was a warning to the government and it has achieved primary success. "People have voiced no-confidence in the government by responding to the call for dislodging it by the deadline."

The leader of the opposition in parliament went on, "Today (April 30) is the beginning of an end and there is nothing to be frustrated."

The AL chief said fresh programmes would be announced soon to unseat the government. She urged all sections of people and political parties to unitedly steer the ongoing movement to its logical end.

Referring to the incidents in the last one month and 'aggressive behaviour' of the government, Hasina said people don't want the coalition to cling to power anymore. People now want mid-term polls to give a fresh mandate, she added.

The government is totally

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Water pours in hundreds of gallons from this illegal roadside water outlet at Old Dhaka's Waiz Ghat. There is no initiative from authorities concerned either to seal the line or at least install a stopper to prevent the huge loss.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a press conference at the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil is seen on her left.

Bhuiyan asks Hasina, Jalil to apologise

Says 'sorry' for mass arrests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday asked Awami League leaders Sheikh Hasina and Abdul Jalil to apologise to the nation and AL activists for misleading them with the April 30 deadline for toppling the government.

The deadline disrupted people's lives, discouraged foreign investment, sent down points in stock exchanges, Bhuiyan told a press

briefing in Dhaka yesterday.

"Abdul Jalil and his leader, Sheikh Hasina, should apologise to the nation and return to fold of constitutional politics by joining parliament," said Bhuiyan, also the local government, rural development and cooperatives minister of the four-party ruling coalition.

Bhuiyan said he was sorry for mass arrest of people ahead of the deadline, but alleged the step was taken to foil the conspiracy of the AL and Proshika, an NGO, to unleash

hit men and micro-credit beneficiaries in Dhaka to create anarchy.

"We are sorry for arrests of innocent people in the bid to catch criminals. But the innocent people were released immediately," he said, terming media reports based on interviews of the arrestees and their relatives in front of Dhaka Central Jail as 'purposeful'.

"We have evidence that they (AL) hired killers from around the country and tried to lure micro-credit beneficiaries into the capital in collusion with Proshika with promises of further loans to create anarchy," Bhuiyan said.

On the 'continuity of AL conspiracy', he asked people to keep a careful watch on upcoming events. "This government will remain in power for another two April 30s in this term," he stressed.

On Jalil's claim that the AL gained a moral victory by unnerving the government with the deadline, Bhuiyan said, "How can they gain a moral victory as what they did in the last months were immoral?"

"We thank Mr Jalil for the deadline as it helped BNP activists shed their differences and unite to strengthen the organisation."

On the AL politics, Bhuiyan said, "They have chosen the path of suicide. They have tremendously suffered from the deadline failure."

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May Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is International Labour Day, traditionally known as the May Day. This year the day will be observed across the globe including Bangladesh with a fresh vow to institutionalise workers' rights.

The May Day commemorates the killing of several demonstrating workers by police on May 1, 1886 on a street at Hay Market in Chicago, USA. They were demanding an eight-hour workday instead of a 12-hour one and recognition of the dignity of labour, among other things.

Apart from the government, various labour and socio-cultural organisations, and political parties have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Today is a public holiday. The state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar will broadcast

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman attend a press conference in the city yesterday.

US marines hand Falluja to former Saddam general

REUTERS, Falluja

US Marines handed control of Falluja to a former general in Saddam Hussein's feared Republican Guard yesterday in bid to end a month-long siege that killed hundreds in the city and infuriated Iraqis.

In what appeared to be a reversal of Washington's policy of excluding members of Saddam's Baathist regime from power, Jasim Mohamed Saleh told Reuters his force would help police and other Iraqi security forces bring order to the town.

The commander of the Marines, who were pulling back from siege positions around the city of 300,000, was quoted as saying the former commanding general of Saddam's 38th Infantry Division would lead a

force of about 900 mostly former Iraqi soldiers to replace the US forces.

"We have now begun forming a new emergency military force to help the forces of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps and the Iraqi police in completing the mission of imposing security and stability in Falluja without the need for the American army, which the people of Falluja reject," Saleh said.

Falluja's police chief confirmed the deal to Reuters.

Holiday
The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of May Day. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

Hundreds of people cheered the former general, who lives in the city, as he made his way into the town centre in uniform in the early afternoon.

A relative said he had been chief-of-staff of a brigade of Saddam's Republican Guard, an elite force that put up the main resistance to US invading forces a year ago. Senior officers were all expected to be members of the ruling Baath party.

The top Marine Corps officer in

Iraq, Lieutenant General James Conway told the New York Times the new unit would be called the 1st Battalion of the Falluja Brigade.

GUERRILLA FIGHTERS
Marines pulled back from positions along the southern and western edges of the city. But they appeared to hold on to strongpoints dominating the Golan district to the north, where they have fought fierce gunbattles and called in bombers on Thursday evening against Sunni Muslim insurgents.

It was unclear what influence the new Iraqi force in Falluja has over the estimated 2,000 or so guerrillas, some of whom US officials say are diehard Saddam supporters in a city once fiercely loyal to his minority Sunni-dominated regime.

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I Believe

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