

Grassroots leaders

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10:00am in the auditorium of the Institution of Engineers' Bangladesh in the capital, amid tight security.

Meanwhile, a small section of grassroots leaders told The Daily Star that their recommendations will include refraining from adopting tougher agitation programmes for the time being as the programmes might collide with the state of emergency, instead they will suggest chalking out of programmes that are best-suited in the context of the prevailing situation.

Recommendations of thana and upazila unit leaders will also be placed at today's meeting.

Sources said AL President Sheikh Hasina advised the leaders of the party to organise the extended meeting to devise future agitation programmes by gathering comprehensive recommendations from all tiers of the party.

AL Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who is responsible for overseeing Dhaka divisions' organisational activities said, "The mood of the grassroots level leaders, as I sense, is uncompromisingly in favour of participating in the dialogues and for contesting in the election under a free Sheikh Hasina."

"There might be different perspectives in terms of strategies to be deployed to achieve that," Saber, also the political secretary to the AL chief, told The Daily Star.

Today's meeting is likely to discuss various crucial issues including ways to free the party chief and take decisions on joining the dialogue with the government and participating in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Presidents and general secretaries of all 74 organisational districts of the party, members of advisory council, former lawmakers, members of national committee, associate members, assistant secretaries and representatives of all its front organisations and Dhaka city unit AL will take part in the extended meeting. The meeting will enable the AL to finalise its next course of action within a couple of days.

Syed Ashraf Islam, acting general secretary of AL, told reporters after a meeting of the party's secretary level leaders in Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi yesterday, "We will take the final decision on crucial issues including the release of Sheikh Hasina, the dialogues, and the elections, based on the recommendations received from the party's grassroots level leaders in a meeting of the central working committee within a few days."

Chaired by Ashraf, yesterday's meeting suggested that at least one leader from each district, the advisory council, and former lawmakers should be given the opportunity to express their opinions at today's meeting, in a bid to have a clear picture of the overall mood in the party.

The grassroots leaders in the meeting will also submit detailed organisational reports as well as their assessment reports on their rival parties. They will also submit lists of cases filed against their leaders and workers during the caretaker government and the BNP-Jamaat coalition regime.

Around 870 leaders will attend the meeting today.

Azadul Islam Azad, general secretary of AL Chittagong district unit, told The Daily Star that although party workers and the general followers want agitation programmes, his unit will urge the party to refrain from announcing any tougher agitation programmes yet and press for the six-point demand since the party still needs to be more organised.

The AL however should not sign

Saifur group

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situation including the ongoing dialogue between the government and political parties.

Insiders said most of the leaders criticised Delwar for creating obstacles to reuniting the party.

Asked about decisions at the meeting, standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahabubur Rahman told The Daily Star last night, "We hope the chairperson will take note of the present circumstances and give the signal to the party."

He said they believe she would nod in favour of unity when she would be produced before court this week including today.

Asked if they would attend the talks with the government in case of a failure of the reconciliation efforts, he said, "We will take the decision in consultation with the party colleagues. Besides, we might have to take our cue from other major political parties."

The caretaker government has invited both the factions to the dialogue.

Former BNP ministers Osman Faruk, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Rejaul Karim, advisers to the chairperson Major Gen (retd) ZA Khan, former lawmakers Abdul Alim, Sarder Shakhat Hossain Bakul, Nazir Hossain, Mushtarrif Hossain Mangu, Rustam Ali Farazi and Zahidur Swapan, among others, were present at the meeting.

Law and order

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any charter or accept any decision imposed by the government, he added.

"We want to take part in the election under the leadership of our party chief," but the AL should not do anything that would leave room for shifting the blame on the party in case the national election is not held, Azad said.

Presidents of Moulovibazar and Tangail district units, Syed Mohsin Ali and Mohammad Fazlur Rahman Faruk, told The Daily Star that they will recommend the party not to join the dialogues or take part in the parliamentary poll without the AL chief's release.

"Without our chief we will neither accept a dialogue nor an election, so we'll recommend the party to go for a tougher agitation programme for freeing her. We are ready for any kind of movements," said Mohsin Ali.

Faruk said they will suggest the party to launch an agitation programme similar to the one that was announced to free Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been arrested on charges of sedition in the Agartala conspiracy case.

Bhola district AL President Mofazzal Hossain Shahin said, "We will suggest the party not to take part in the upcoming elections without the release of our party chief."

He however said his unit believes that the party should join the dialogues and strongly press for Hasina's release before the elections.

If the government does not pay heed to our demands ahead of the election, we will suggest that the central [AL] announce vigorous agitation programmes to free our leader [Hasina]," Mofazzal told The Daily Star.

Advocate Nurul Islam Sujon, president of Panchagarh district AL, told The Daily Star that they prime minister would be released on July 15, 2005. The UN General Assembly had elected him for a five-year term and he is the UN refugee agency's 10th high commissioner.

As high commissioner, he heads one of the world's principal humanitarian agencies.

UNHCR has twice won the Nobel Peace Prize and it works in over 110 countries providing protection and assistance to nearly 33 million refugees and others of concern. The agency's total budget for 2008 is more than \$1.6 billion.

During the last two years, the government allowed the UN refugee agency, other UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to make many improvements there, the release said.

Salahuddin Ahmed, general secretary of Cox's Bazar district AL, told The Daily Star that their prime minister would be released on July 15, 2005. The UN General Assembly had elected him for a five-year term and he is the UN refugee agency's 10th high commissioner.

He also said his unit will suggest the AL central not to take any decision that will pave the way for the anti-liberation war forces and the BNP to assume power.

ACC official

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the trial within the stipulated time.

During the trial yesterday, the defence lawyer advocate Syed Rezanur Rahman asked the plaintiff Sabir whether in his investigation he had found that the New England Power Company had become ineligible for the contract as it had breached several conditions. He replied that he had not.

The defence asked Sabir whether he knew anything about the negotiation committee was formed, how many members it had and how many meetings it held. He replied that he didn't know.

The defence also asked the plaintiff in which month the negotiation committee sent its report and whether he knew which country Wartsila was from.

The plaintiff replied in the negative to both questions.

When the defence stated that neither the Summit Group nor the United Group was a permanent representative of Wartsila, the plaintiff said that was not true.

When the defence stated that the FIR statement 'Hasina had benefited economically' was false and ill-motivated, the plaintiff said that was not true.

The defence lawyers later told reporters that the court's one-sided behaviour in the case was regrettable. "The court is trying to conclude the case quickly and carelessly and if this goes on then justice will not be served," advocate Kamrul Islam said.

Other defence lawyers said that the apparent hurry of the court makes it seem like a verdict in the case has already been decided. Rezanur Rahman pointed out that there was no similarity between the plaintiff's statements in the court and the statements in the FIR.

The plaintiff also could not give clear answers to some questions, he added.

He alleged that a certain group, including some within the ACC, had made the IO fabricate the case to undermine Sheikh Hasina.

The ACC filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2, 2007.

Meanwhile in reply to a question, advocate Abdul Mannan told reporters that Sheikh Hasina had expressed hope that the right decision would emerge from the extended meeting of Awami League scheduled for today.

Hasina, Khaleda

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September 3 last year. She faces trial proceedings against her in the Niko graft case.

Judge Khondker Kamal Uz-Zaman will conduct the Special Judge-Court-9 on the parliament complex before which Khaleda will be produced.

On the other hand, judge Amar Kumar Roy will conduct the trial proceedings against Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at the Special Judge Court-2 on the same premises to face the same case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case against Tejgaon Police Station against Khaleda Zia, former law minister Moudud Ahmed and former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam and vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Resources Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif on December 9 last year.

Six others were named as defendants later after a probe found their involvement. On the same day, ACC also filed similar charges against Sheikh Hasina at the same police station.

On May 5, SM Sahidur Rahman, ACC assistant director and the investigation officer (IO), submitted charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court in Dhaka against Khaleda Zia and 10 others for abuse of power and graft in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

SM Sahidur Rahman submitted the charge sheet showing 68 people as prosecution witnesses.

In On May 7, ACC deputy director Sabir Hasan, who is also the investigating officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the

DAB leader

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Guterres will spend a day in Kutupalong Refugee Camp, home to almost 10,800 refugees, and meet refugees, visit medical and feeding centres as well as inspect new housing units that are being built for the refugees.

During the last two years, the government allowed the UN refugee agency, other UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to make many improvements there, the release said.

As the couple is absconding, their sentences will come into effect the day of their arrest or surrender.

ACC Assistant Director Nasiruddin Ahmed lodged the case with Ramna Police Station on October 3 last year in connection with hiding information about their wealth worth over Tk 2.22 crore.

The court framed charges against the couple on March 18 this year.

Zahid's name was on the second list of corruption suspects published by the ACC.

The US ambassador lauded the considerable improvement made in the management of Chittagong Port.

On the ongoing drive against corruption, he said one of the biggest problems the country had to face was tackling corruption.

"However, corruption does not have a broad-based support in the society and the people of Bangladesh are expected to win," Moriarty said.

Replying to a question about US assistance in combating corruption and terrorism, he said, "To deny space for terrorism there has to be an effective government, effective democracy and development that would provide alternative to turning to terrorism... The US government is giving assistance to Bangladesh to uproot both."

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