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Ashraf's journey as party's general secretary was not smooth. The AL went through a major shake up. His predecessor Abdul Jalil was ousted from the post of general secretary in a humiliating way. He was forced to step down as AL general secretary on July 21, 2009 within seven months of his party coming to power. Before his resignation, the then joint general secretary Syed Ashraful Islam was acting as party's general secretary for several months. Jalil was not allowed to assume the functions of the general secretary even after his release from jail. So, he resigned just three days ahead of the AL national council alleging that he was not being allowed to function as the party's general secretary. He was widely regarded as loyal to AL and its chief Sheikh Hasina. But he did not get due honour from his party during the last days of his life. [Jalil died on March 6, 2013.]

Why was he forced to resign? Some media reports centring round Jalil's resignation said Hasina became annoyed with Jalil following some comments he had made at the time of his detention during the military – backed caretaker government, and even after his release from jail.

While in detention, Jalil once said Hasina ran the party in an 'autocratic manner', although after his release he recanted the statement, saying he had been forced to make the comment. But Hasina did not trust Jalil, which frustrated the veteran AL leader. And later he, in and outside the parliament, strongly criticised some ministers labelling them as 'paid agents of the DGFI'. He also criticised the practice of allowing advisers to the prime minister to be present in cabinet meetings.

The way Jalil was forced to resign as general secretary has exposed the darker side of the AL after the 2008 parliamentary polls. The AL's rival BNP, that won the majority in the 2001 parliamentary polls, had also made such a blunder within a few months after assuming power. They forced the then elected President AQM Badruddozza Chowdhury to resign, whose loyalty to the BNP was beyond question. His departure was considered as the beginning of the downfall of the BNP-led government. The same is true for in case of Jalil whose resignation shocked many AL leaders and workers who feared for the future of the AL.

Empowered by the last council, the AL chief formed new presidium and central working committee without bigwigs like Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzaque, Tofail Ahmed, Jalil and Suranjit Sengupta and some other rising leaders who were also not inducted into Hasina's cabinet for their plan to bring reforms in the party during the caretaker government. Instead, she had chosen those in the cabinet and party who were blindly loyal to her leadership. Thus within seven months, Hasina emerged as the supreme leader both in her party and cabinet. She began the historic journey in the history of AL and of course in Bangladesh. None before Hasina was so powerful.

Yet Ashraful does not need to be worried much as he still enjoys the blessing of the AL supremo. So, he might be able to overcome the crisis and consolidate his position in the party.

But some crucial questions need to be answered. Is Ashraf alone responsible for the fragile state of the AL? Didn't the ouster of some bigwigs from the party's policymaking level have made the party weak? Now that Jalil is dead, has Ashraf become the new scapegoat?

Many in the AL and political analysts believe the party leaders remained largely inactive in face and fear of the rise of Hasina's supreme leadership!

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