

5 new advisers sworn-in

Five new advisers were sworn into office on Wednesday evening at a low-key ceremony at the Bangladesh Bank, reports bdnews24.com. President Iajuddin Ahmed inducted former BIDS senior research fellow Hossain Zillur Rahman, retired major general Golam Quader, former secretary AMM Shawkat Ali, former attorney general AF Hassan Ariff and former ADAB president Rasheda K Chowdhury into office at 6:30pm. The ceremony started with

recitations from the Quran by Moulana Abdul Halim at 6:23pm and was over in 10 minutes. Cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder listed the names of the new advisers and Iajuddin swore them into office.

The programme ended in a matter of 10 minutes; followed by a tea party. Majumder had earlier told bdnews24.com that the programme would take place in a low-key fashion.

The chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force were not invited to the ceremony, he said.

"Diplomats and former advisers were not invited either," he said.

Speaking to bdnews24.com by telephone earlier in the day, Ariff and Rasheda pledged to do their best to help the caretaker government to hold a free, fair election within the scheduled timeframe.

"This is a big responsibility. I need everyone's cooperation," Ariff said.

He said the government would transfer power to an elected government, which is its main responsibility.

"We have to think about a legal framework for this," he said.

Ariff worked under the four-party coalition government as attorney general since Oct 14, 2001 before he resigned on April 26, 2005.

The main aim of Rasheda as an adviser to the caretaker government would be to present the nation a free, fair voting.

She said she would be "very sincere" in properly discharging the responsibilities as an adviser.

"The main aim of the present caretaker government is to present the nation with a free, fair and neutral election. As an adviser my aim will be the same too."

"Besides I will try my level best to perform the responsibility which the chief adviser reposes on me."

The chief executive of the Cam-
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campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Rasheda said her appointment as an adviser was confirmed by the high level of government Tuesday night.

On Wednesday she went to her CAMPE office at Humayun Road in Mohammadpur as usual. After doing office work there for some time she returned to her Banani home.

Shawkat Ali said: "I need cooperation from all to do my job."

Hossain Zillur Rahman said: "We have taken up the tasks in critical times. But we can succeed if we work together."

"Reforms are going on at the national level. Prices are rising on the international market. That's why we have to pay more attention to the economy."

"We will try to work together. Let's see what happens," he said.

In his reaction, Golam Quader said: "We need your cooperation. The economy is a big challenge."

In a dramatic turn of events, law adviser Mainul Hossain, health adviser ASM Matur Rahman, power and food adviser Tapan

Chowdhury and industry adviser Geetara Safiya Choudhury quit the Fakhruddin administration Tuesday.

Cultural affairs adviser Ayub Quadri was the first to resign his post on Dec 26, taking responsibility for the loss of two rare Vishnu statues.

The resignations piqued people's curiosity about the new advisers as bdnews24.com revealed the names of the probable cabinet members early Wednesday.

The 'resignations', which some top government officials said were forced, came three days before the anniversary of the changeover by the military-backed government.

The leaders of the country's leading business groups Wednesday said the caretakers should have brought about the changes in the government at least six months ago.

Regulatory Reforms Commission chairman Akbar Ali Khan Tuesday said the advisers might have been removed from their posts.

"Government officials are removed from their posts for failure to do their jobs properly. The same thing may have happened to the advisers," Khan said.

"These are routine resignations," he said.

Mainul has often been accused by the media and the public of making outrageous and inconsistent comments on sensitive political topics.

His remarks came at a time when the caretaker administration says it is committed to holding a free and fair election by year-end.

Mainul told a private television station Monday that the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led government would live up to its pledges that include curbing corruption and delivering a flawless democracy through a credible election.

He also said that some vested groups were trying to push the government into trouble, but did not elaborate.

Tapan drew flak for his recent comment that the government has nothing to do with runaway food prices despite the prices have doubled since the emergency administration took charge in Jan 2007.

Geetara in Nov last year termed the fertiliser crisis that prompted nationwide protests a 'myth' created by the media and the former ruling administration.