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# 5-party cabinet of 49

28 new faces; JP plays dual role, only 2 tiny parties solely on opposition bench

SHAKHAWAT LITON and PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, who was sworn in as prime minister yesterday, formed her council of ministers by inducting lawmakers of four other parties into her cabinet.

In the 49-member council of ministers, she included the chiefs of the Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Jatiya Party-Manju and three MPs of the Ershad-led Jatiya Party.

Tarikat Federation and BNF, the two other parties having representation in parliament, are not in the cabinet. Having one MP each, they will sit on the opposition benches in the House dominated by the AL, which has a three-fourths majority.

The inclusion of Ershad's JP in the cabinet is unprecedented in that the party will also be the main opposition party. Its leader Raushan Ershad has already been recognised by the Speaker as the leader of the opposition.

Speaking about the unique cabinet, Hasina claimed, "A similar government was formed in 1996 following a consensus."

The nature of her previous government (1996-2001) was different, however. At the time, Ershad's JP joined her government

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MINISTERS AND PORTFOLIO -- PAGE 2



PHOTO: PID

President Abdul Hamid swears in Sheikh Hasina as prime minister at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban yesterday.

	<b>29</b> ministers + PM	<b>17</b> state ministers	<b>2</b> deputy ministers	<b>4</b> women members	<b>32</b> ministers were elected MPs unopposed
<b>NEW CABINET AT A GLANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jatiya Party, Workers' Party, JSD &amp; JP (Manju) join Awami League-led 49-member cabinet</li> <li>BNF &amp; Tarikat Federation left as 2-member opposition!</li> </ul>				

TAINTED FIGURES

## Many go, a few stay

HASAN JAHID TUSHER, RASHIDUL HASAN and WASIM BIN HABIB

While several tainted figures have been left out, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's cabinet includes a few politicians who have earned a bad name in the last five years.

Despite a series of controversies, Shahjahan Khan remains shipping minister while Quamrul Islam, state minister for law in the grand alliance government, becomes food minister.

Shahjahan, a top labour leader, faced severe criticism for his 2011 remark that "If one can sign his name, understand traffic signs and signals



and knows the difference between a cow and a goat, he should be issued a driving licence."

He had also defended drivers on many occasions even as rights groups demanded exemplary punishment for reckless driving following a sharp rise

in road accidents. Shahjahan, who reportedly controlled the entire road transport sector, had asked a Jatiya Sangsad committee to recommend legalising extortion "to stop rampant corruption" in the trans

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### Manmohan greets PM

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh phoned Sheikh Hasina last evening and congratulated her on assuming office as prime minister of Bangladesh.

He wished her and the people of Bangladesh all success in the endeavour to strengthen democratic institutions in Bangladesh, according to a press release of the Indian high commission.

Manmohan Singh is the first head of government to congratulate Sheikh Hasina

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## Ershad finally back home with new role

Made PM's special envoy

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Former military ruler HM Ershad yesterday became a special envoy to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and at the same time recovered from his mysterious "illness", making it a day of double fun for him.

Ershad, who was the centrepiece of a long-drawn drama over his party's flip-flop on joining the otherwise one-sided January 5 polls, was whisked away by government intelligence men from his Baridhara residence on December 12 to keep him behind a veil of smokescreen.

He had been, since then, at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka Cantonment for a publicly unknown "illness" but was enjoying occasional golf breaks. He went straight home from the Bangabhaban ceremony of Sheikh Hasina's new government formation.

As Hasina's special envoy, Ershad will enjoy ministerial status henceforth. It is history now that on his directives, more than 180 of his party's MP aspirants had to withdraw from the polls race.

"I'm quite well. Soon, I'll get released

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## 10-truck arms haul cases at final stage

Verdict date likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong special tribunal could today set the date for the verdict delivery in the sensational 10-truck arms haul cases of 2004.

Former BNP state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, former industries minister, war crimes accused and Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and a few high-ranking intelligence agency and government officials are accused in the cases.

A huge quantity of arms and ammunition, reportedly meant for Indian separatist organisation ULFA, was captured at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty in Chittagong on April 2, 2004, when they were being loaded on to 10 trucks.

Two cases, an arms case and a smuggling case, were filed with Karnaphuli Police

Station the following day.

Yesterday, prosecutor Kamal Uddin Ahmed finished his closing arguments before the tribunal conducting the "summary procedure". The prosecutor said he would submit before the court detailed arguments in writing in two days since the tribunal rules did not allow closing arguments.

The Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 said the court allowed the closing argument to maintain the tradition of court proceedings and ordered defence lawyers to complete their arguments by today and submit the elaborate arguments in writing before the court within two days.

Following the court proceedings, prosecutor Kamal told The Daily Star the nation

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Despite the 18-party called blockade, city dwellers in their thousands went about their business yesterday, triggering citywide gridlocks. The photo was taken at Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Farmgate yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## No blockade from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 18-party enforced countrywide blockade ended at 6.00am today relieving the nation of a gruelling two and a half months-long suffering due to hartals and blockades by the BNP-led opposition combine.

The opposition announced on Saturday that with the 24-hr blockade ending this morning, hartals and blockade programmes had been stalled indefinitely till further notice.

Yesterday's was the sixth bout of blockade enforced by the opposition alliance since October 27 last year.

In the last 78 days, people had to endure 15 days of hartals and 36 days of rail, roads and waterways blockades, most of which

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**Notice**  
Today's newspaper carries a four-page special on Dhaka International Trade Fair. The Business pages have been dedicated to the coverage of the nation's largest trade exposition.

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