

‘Illegally appointed’ key officials removed

ISLAMABAD: The cabinet approved the removal of nine top officials from regulatory bodies, public sector banks and financial institutions after Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered their exclusion from key positions claiming they were ‘illegally appointed’ by former finance minister Ishaq Dar.

The approval comes despite Finance Minister Asad Umar’s efforts to convince the cabinet headed by PM to regularise five appointments made by Ishaq Dar to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP).

The officials dismissed include Saeed Ahmed, president National Bank of Pakistan (NBP); Ms Tahira Raza, president First Women Bank Ltd (FWBL); Syed Talat, president Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL); and Ehsanul Haq, president Small and Medium Enterprises Bank (SME). The tenure of the NBP president was set to expire on January 1, 2019; president First Women Bank was serving on extension, president ZTBL on April 27, 2018 while president of the SME’s tenure ended on Mar 2.

In addition, five regulators appointed during the previous government’s tenure have also been removed including: Jameel Ahmed, the deputy governor of the SBP; Shamsul Hassan, the deputy governor of the SBP; Ms Vadiyya Khalil, the chairperson of the CCP; Dr Mohammad Saleem member of the CCP; and Shahzad Ansar member of CCP.

Finance minister Asad Umar came to the support of appointments made at the SBP and CCP terming their performance satisfactory. Asad Umar suggested the cabinet to retain their services but it was rejected on the basis of legal violations made to appoint these officers.

According to an official document, in November 2016 a summary was sent to cabinet in which former minister Ishaq Dar was unlawfully delegated by the previous government to appoint directors on the boards of organisation. In another summary sent to cabinet in February 2017, Dar was also authorised to appoint CEOs of corporations, statutory bodies, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies attached with the finance division including deputy governors of SBP with concurrence of the prime minister.

The issue of illegal appointments came to surface when PTI-led coalition government began investigating the case of President NBP Saeed. The law division suggested to the government that since Mr Saeed’s appointment was unlawful, no vested interest accrued in his favour and he could be terminated without complying with the requirements of natural justice.

As a result, this exercise was extended to other top appointments made by Dar.