

No women in Brazilian acting President's cabinet

13/05/2016 20:28 by admin

Brasilia: Brazilian acting President Michel Temer on Thursday chose leading figures from nine centrist and conservative parties for his cabinet, which for the first time in decades has no female ministers.

Temer, who had been vice president, replaced Dilma Rousseff of the centre-left Workers Party, or PT, Brazil's first woman head of state, who was suspended from office after the Senate voted 55-22 early on Thursday to subject her to an impeachment trial.

While the heads of the Mines and Energy and National Integration portfolios still remain to be filled, the cabinet could have no female representation for the first time since the 1970s, when Brazil was under a military dictatorship.

Temer's press office has confirmed two of the appointments: Henrique Meirelles and Sen. Jose Serra, who will head the finance ministry and foreign ministry, respectively.

Â Â Â **The appointment of Meirelles, an inflation hawk who was the central bank governor during the 2003-2011 administration of president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Rousseff's political mentor and predecessor, is aimed at winning the approval of the private sector and investors, according to media reports.**

Meanwhile, the inclusion of Serra, a former Sao Paulo governor and presidential candidate in 2002 and 2010, is expected to lead to an abrupt shift in Brazil's foreign policy and an end to its friendly ties in recent years with leftist-led neighbors such as Venezuela and Bolivia.

Temer's decision to include nine different parties in his cabinet also shows the priority he is placing on ensuring a strong relationship with Congress and guaranteeing legislative majorities.

But the choice of Henrique Eduardo Alves to head the tourism ministry and Gilberto Kassab to lead the science, technology and communications portfolio came as surprises since both men had been part of Rousseff's cabinet until just a few weeks ago.

Temer's Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, or PMDB, a former PT ally turned foe, will hold the largest number of ministries of any single political grouping with six out of the 24.

Also represented are the Brazilian Social Democracy Party, the Brazilian Republican Party, the Progressive Party, the Democrats, the Brazilian Labour Party, the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist People's Party.

Rousseff, who will be suspended from office for the duration of the trial in the upper house, a maximum of 180 days, could be permanently removed if convicted by a two-thirds majority of using accounting trickery in 2014, when she won re-election, and 2015 to disguise the size of the budget deficit.

That outcome appears likely given Thursday's lopsided vote in the Senate.

Rousseff denies any wrongdoing and says she is the victim of a coup.

If she is permanently ousted, Temer will serve out the rest of her term, which currently is due to expire on January 1, 2019.

- IANS