



Pakistan's ambassador to WTO declines govt's extension offer

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ISLAMABAD: Dr Syed Tauqir Shah on Tuesday voluntarily withdrew from the extension he was granted by the government as ambassador to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In a hand-written statement he furnished before a three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, Dr Shah contended that he would not opt for the extension but he should be allowed to disengage himself from the most prestigious office in accordance with the standard operating procedure of the Foreign Office that will only enhance Pakistan's dignity at the world comity.

"I am holding the flag of Pakistan in a foreign land; therefore I should be allowed to withdraw in accordance with the laid down procedure," said Dr Shah, who also served as the former principal secretary to Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

SC issues notice to Musharraf for recovery of losses incurred after NRO promulgation

He was summoned by the Supreme Court on a suo motu notice on the extension he was granted by the government. Earlier the court had restrained Dr Shah from travelling abroad.

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Dr Shah explained before the court that he was required to attend WTO talks on Thursday in which Sunil Mittal, the president of the International Chamber of Commerce, would be representing the Indian side whereas he would represent Pakistan.

It would give a very adverse image if the seat of Pakistan remained vacant during the talks, he said, adding that Pakistan was the flag-bearer of certain causes in the world.

The court was about to suspend Dr Shah's position as the ambassador to the WTO, but on the insistence of Attorney General Ashtar Ausaf for the sake of continuity, the court showed restraint. The AG observed that the ambassador was the face of the country and it was important for Pakistan that the office should be continued.

The chief justice, however, observed that Dr Shah was not eligible, rather he was favoured for services he rendered to the Punjab chief minister.

CJP Nisar said that Dr Shah's suspension would not damage the interest of Pakistan because his appointment smacked of nepotism.

"He was a blue-eyed boy and was doled out bounties by being appointed the ambassador for his services when his name was mentioned in the Model Town tragedy," the court regretted.

Were only such persons left to serve Pakistan, the court asked, adding that the caretaker government could examine his extension. Dr Shah, however, offered to withdraw voluntarily but said he should be allowed to inform that he had been recalled by his country.

NRO-Musharraf

Meanwhile, the same bench again issued a notice to former president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf, but allowed senior counsel Farooq Naek to submit a reply on behalf of former president Asif Ali Zardari on a petition moved for the recovery of huge losses Pakistan had incurred after the promulgation of National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) in 2007.

The court directed the AG to issue advertisements in two newspapers of the country where Pervez Musharraf resides and postponed further proceedings for a month.

The notices were issued on the petition moved by Advocate Feroz Shah Gilani, president of the Lawyers Foundation for Justice.

The petitioner has named Pervez Musharraf, former attorney general Malik Mohammad Qayyum, former president Asif Ali Zardari and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as respondents to whom notices were issued by the court.

In his petition, Mr Gilani had pleaded before the court to order recovery of huge amounts of public money misappropriated and wasted by the respondents through unlawful means already on record in different judgements of the Supreme Court and high court.

The petitioner contended that Gen Musharraf subverted the Constitution by declaring an emergency, followed by the promulgation of NRO, arbitrarily withdrawing criminal and corruption cases against the politicians, including Asif Ali Zardari, which caused huge financial losses to the national exchequer.

Since the Supreme Court in its landmark judgement of Dec 16, 2009, had declared the NRO void ab initio, the respondents were liable to compensate the losses and the damages suffered by the exchequer of debt-ridden Pakistan, including the loss of \$60 million stashed in Swiss banks allegedly by Asif Zardari.

Likewise, former AG Malik Qayyum wrote a letter to the Attorney General, Geneva (Switzerland), withdrawing the criminal and civil proceedings against Asif Zardari, but the Supreme Court in its 2009 judgement held that Malik Qayyum wrote the letter in his personal capacity, against the Rules of Business, 1973.

Gen Musharraf and Malik Qayyum willfully violated their oath of office to the detriment of the country, the petition alleged.

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