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The Spanta row

Minister falls victim to power struggle between President and Parliament

By FAHEEM DASHTY

The dispute between the President and Parliament over the dismissal of Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, the Foreign Minister, has resulted in a boycott of sessions by MPs.

Some legislators have decided to keep boycotting parliamentary sessions until the removal of Dr. Spanta is confirmed by the President.

The unseating of Dr. Spanta took place after the parliament questioned the role of both the Immigrant and Foreign Affairs Ministries in the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran.

The Immigrant and Foreign Affairs Ministers were summoned to parliament to answer question on the crisis, and subsequently submitted to a vote of confidence. Both lost.

But after the sacking of Dr. Spanta with 141 MPs voting against him on Saturday, May 12,

the President sent a letter to the Supreme Court asking an the interpretation of the parliament decision.

The letter of the President focused on two main points. Hamid Karzai questioned "the summoning of the Foreign Minister to Parliament over an issue not directly related to his job". The President also sought the highest court's opinion on twice summoning a minister to Parliament on the same question.

The Supreme Court is yet to comment about the decision, but Sultan Ahmad Bahin, the spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that there is no direct link between the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran and the responsibilities of the ministry.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible to solve problems like the detention of an Afghan in a foreign country, legal prob-

lems of expatriate Afghans and similar issues through its representations in that country," said Bahin, adding that the issue of Afghan refugees in Iran is a "responsibility" of Immigrants Ministry. "The Immigrants Ministry should have resolved the issue through its office in Iran."

Sardar Rahmad Oghli, a legislator from Faryab, objected to the move of the President: "As a matter of fact, the protection of Afghans' rights in a foreign country is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

Nevertheless, the latest move of the President who asked the Supreme Court to review the decision of the Parliament is being criticized and even considered illegal by some MPs and legal experts.

For the former deputy of the Supreme Court Mawlana Fazel Ahmad Mahnawi, the

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The Emergency crisis

Weeks after the detention of the Director Helmand's Emergency Hospital, and the departure of most Emergency Italian staff in protest, the network of hospitals is now an empty shell. P. 5

Iran expels refugees

The government is striving to stop the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran, but hundreds are being expelled daily with dire humanitarian consequences. P. 4

Pressing for freedom

Tolo TV owner Saad Mohseni worries that freedom of the press may be curtailed. He explains why a democratic Afghanistan needs a thriving and free media. P. 2

Films to be censored?

Filmmakers will have to get their film scripts vetted by the ministry prior to shooting. They oppose what they see as a move towards censorship. P. 5

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