

Explain local polls bar on teachers

HC asks govt, EC

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The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government and Election Commission (EC) to explain within two weeks why certain provisions of three ordinances concerning local government elections should not be declared illegal.

The ordinances contain provisions barring teachers of institutions that get the government's monthly pay order (MPO) from contesting local bodies' polls.

An HC bench comprised of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamoon Rahman issued the rule after hearing a writ petition filed by Abdus Samad, a lecturer at Putia Ideat Degree College in Rajshahi.

The chief adviser, chief election commissioner (CEC), president's

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secretary, cabinet secretary and law secretary have to reply to the rule.

During the hearing yesterday, petitioner's counsel advocate Tajul Islam told the court that as per provisions of the constitution, the caretaker government cannot take policy decisions like imposing restrictions on teachers of institutions getting government's financial assistance from contesting polls.

The government and the EC have been stressing that honest and qualified candidates would contest elections, he said, adding teachers are believed to be honest people.

"If these provisions of the ordinances are implemented, the teachers cannot contest elections despite being honest and qualified people," the counsel said.

Abdus Samad filed the writ petition on August 31 challenging legality of Section 9(2) of the City Corporation Election Ordinance 2008, Section 19(2) of the Pourasabha Election Ordinance 2008 and Section 16(2) of the Upazila Parishad Ordinance 2008, which prohibit teachers of institutions getting the government's MPO from contesting polls.

He stated in the petition that he was earlier elected a ward commissioner of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) but he could not contest the RCC elections this year because of these provisions of the ordinances.