

The High Court on Sunday asked the government to inform it in a month about the steps taken so far for employment of persons with disabilities in line with the Disabled Welfare Act 2001, which stipulates equal rights to work for such persons.

The High Court bench of Justice Mohammad Mamtazuddin Ahmed and Justice Naima Haider decided to give further orders on May 26.

The court passed the order after hearing two writ petitions filed by a visually impaired person and four rights organisations seeking a directive to the government to ensure rights of persons with disabilities to work in all sectors.

The secretaries to the establishment, law, social welfare, and health ministries, Bangladesh Public Service Commission and its chairman and secretary and the controller of examinations (cadre), the judicial service commission and its chairman and secretary, director general of the directorate of health, and the national disability welfare coordination committee and its chairman and secretary have been made respondents to the writ petitions.

The writ petitions, filed by Ain O Shalish Kendra, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Action on Disability and Development and National Council of Disabled Women, also challenged the legality of the decision for not allowing visually-impaired candidate Swapan Chowkider to sit for the examinations of the Public Service Commission and the Judicial Service Commission.

The petitioners' counsel, Khondakar Shahriar Shakir, referred to the Disabled Welfare Act 2001, which says, 'The government will ensure equal right to work for the persons with disability in the government statutory organisations on the basis of their qualification.'

The counsel also said, 'The law stipulates that the government will relax the age limit for job of such persons, and to maintain the quota for persons with disabilities.'

'But the government is violating the provision denying rights of persons with disability,' he added.

Attorney general Mahbubey Alam, however, argued that persons with disabilities all over the world had played a role in the society. 'But they are not fit for work in the public service and the judiciary.'

Deputy attorney general Mostafa Zaman Islam also expressed similar views.

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