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## Lahore Court Halts NA-175 By-Poll Schedule

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The Lahore High Court (LHC) has suspended the by-election schedule for the NA-175 constituency, following a legal challenge to the disqualification of former MNA Jamshed Dasti. The suspension order was issued on Wednesday by a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Aalia Neelum.

The petitioner, believed to be Dasti himself, had earlier filed a case against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to disqualify him from contesting the by-polls. The case was initially brought before the LHC's Multan Bench, which then referred the matter to

the court's principal seat in Lahore, suggesting that a larger bench be constituted due to the legal complexities involved.

In an additional plea, the petitioner requested an urgent hearing, citing concerns over the scheduled election timeline. He argued that delaying court proceedings could unfairly prevent him from contesting, and pointed out that development funds tied to the election process might go to waste if the ECP's decision is later overturned.

During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel, Ishtiaq Chaudhry, questioned the ECP's authority to disqualify a candidate without a formal judicial declaration. He maintained that such powers rest with the courts, not the election body, and referenced a past Supreme Court ruling to support his argument.

Chaudhry told the bench that the disqualification stemmed from a reference forwarded by the Speaker of the National Assembly based on complaints. However, he insisted that the correct legal process was not followed, particularly the requirement of a court ruling before disqualification.

After considering the arguments, the LHC bench decided to halt the election schedule and issued a notice to the ECP, requesting a formal response to the legal challenge.

Outside the courtroom, Dasti addressed the media, stating that he was being targeted for his support of PTI founder Imran Khan. He expressed hope in the judicial process and said he remained confident that the courts would deliver justice.

The case is expected to continue in the coming days, with a focus on whether the ECP acted within its legal boundaries in disqualifying the candidate.