STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs) FOR BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION OF LITIGANTS

1. SHORT TITLE AND COMMENCEMENT

a) *These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) shall be called the "Lahore High Court Biometric Verification SOPs".*

b) *They shall come into force with immediate effect.*

2. PURPOSE

a) *These SOPs aim to ensure accurate identification of litigants, prevent impersonation, enhance transparency and strengthen the integrity of judicial proceedings.*

b) *These SOPs are issued in pursuance of the policy decision of the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee and in conformity with international best practices for secure personal identification.*

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

a) *These SOPs shall apply to all judicial proceedings before the Lahore High Court and the District Judiciary Punjab, including civil, criminal, commercial, writ petitions, family, rent, election appeals/disputes, bail matters, and other relevant matters.*

b) *These SOPs shall apply to the litigants filing cases of any nature including applications, defendants/respondents filing written statements/replies, sureties submitting the surety bonds before the courts, person(s) making statements (where required) and any other person whose biometric verification is required by a court in any proceedings.*

4. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these SOPs, the following expressions shall have the meanings assigned to them hereunder:

a) ***"Biometrics"** means electronically captured fingerprints of a CNIC holder or his iris or facial recognition.*

b) ***"Biometric Verification"** means the matching of fingerprints captured against a CNIC and transmitted to NADRA/NTL with the fingerprints stored in the NADRA database against the same CNIC. It shall also include iris as well as facial recognition.*

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c) ***"Litigant"*** *means a person or party who is involved in a lawsuit or a case or legal proceedings, either by bringing a case before a court or by defending against one.*

Explanation: For these SOPs, the litigant includes a surety, a person making a statement, or any person whose biometric verification is sought by a Court.

d) ***"NADRA"*** *means National Database Registration Authority.*

e) ***"NADRA e-Sahulat Centre"*** *means a designated NADRA-linked computerized facility providing biometric verification services at designated place(s)/ location(s).*

5. MANDATORY BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION

Biometric verification shall be mandatory for:

a) *all litigants filing suits, petitions, appeals or applications of any nature;*
b) *defendants or respondents filing written statements or replies;*
c) *sureties submitting surety bonds;*
d) *person(s) making statements where so required by the Court;*
e) *any person whose biometric verification is required by a court in any proceedings; and*
f) *A person seeking withdrawal of an amount deposited under the order of a court.*

6. SINGLE LITIGANT INSTITUTING MULTIPLE CASES

a) *Where a single litigant institutes multiple cases, biometric verification shall be performed separately for each case at the time of its filing. The same principle shall apply to the defendant(s).*
b) *No single verification shall suffice for more than one case.*

7. MULTIPLE LITIGANTS IN A SINGLE CASE

a) *Where two or more litigants file a single case, suit, petition, appeal or application, each litigant shall undergo individual biometric verification.*
b) *Where two or more persons defend a single case, suit, petition, appeal or application, each defendant/ respondent shall undergo individual biometric verification.*
c) *If one person is legally competent to file or defend the lis on behalf of the others, then biometric verification of only such person shall be required.*

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8. LITIGANTS IN CUSTODY

a) For identification, a litigant in custody shall undergo the biometric verification in a jail or a judicial lockup or a reformatory through the system installed/available therein to file or defend a case.

b) The jail authorities shall arrange for biometric verification of the litigants.

9. ACCUSED ON BAIL

a) After submission of the report under section 173 of CrPC, or on summoning in a complaint, the accused on bail shall undergo the biometric verification for ascertainment of his identity on or before the first appearance.

b) A person filing a private complaint under section 200 CrPC or any other law shall undergo the biometric verification before filing such a complaint.

10. FILING OF BAIL PETITIONS

a) The accused filing the pre-arrest bail petitions shall undergo the biometric verification as prescribed in these SOPs.

b) An accused who is a minor or under the prescribed legal age shall be exempted from biometric verification in pre-arrest/protective bail petitions subject to the following conditions:

   i. Submission of valid Child Registration Certificate (CRC/B-Form) or Family Registration Certificate (FRC) issued by NADRA.

   ii. Filing of an affidavit sworn by the father or guardian of the minor, duly attested by an Oath Commissioner, incorporating a passport size coloured photograph and expressly stating: "That the litigant is a minor/juvenile/under-age."

   iii. The aforementioned affidavit must be annexed to the bail application.

c) In case of post-arrest bail petitions, the jail authorities shall arrange for biometric verification of the accused in custody. In case of minor accused, the above conditions shall also apply.

11. CASES INVOLVING MINORS

a) A minor litigant may be exempted from biometric verification upon submission of a NADRA-issued CRC/B-Form or FRC.

b) The case shall be instituted or defended through a next friend or guardian.

c) The next friend or guardian shall undergo mandatory biometric verification.

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d) *The minor's photograph attached to the case file shall be attested by the Designated Officer in the presence of the next friend or guardian.*

12. CASES INVOLVING PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

a) *A person claimed to be with a mental disorder must be declared as such by a competent court in terms of Mental Health Ordinance 2001, and a guardian appointed by the court under the Ordinance.*

b) *The guardian of a person with mental health conditions or disorder shall have to undergo the biometric verification in respect of a case by or against the person with a mental disorder.*

13. LITIGATION BY OR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OR AN AUTONOMOUS BODY OR A CORPORATION ETC.

a) *In case of litigation by or against the government or a corporation or an autonomous body etc., the authorized representative of the government, concerned department, a corporation, or an autonomous body etc. shall undergo the biometric verification as prescribed herein. The authority letter shall be annexed to the case.*

b) *Where the litigant is a juristic person (company etc.), biometric verification of the authorized officer(s) or director(s) shall be conducted, and a certified copy of the resolution and authority letter shall be annexed.*

14. REPRESENTATION BY AUTHORIZED PERSONS

Where a litigant is represented by an authorized representative, general/special power of attorney holder, such authorized person shall undergo biometric verification.

15. LITIGANTS RESIDING ABROAD

a) *Where a litigant ordinarily resides abroad and is represented by an authorized person in Pakistan, such authorized representative shall undergo biometric verification provided the case is filed or defended through him.*

b) *The power of attorney or authorization document must be attested by the Pakistani Embassy/Consulate in the resident country and subsequently countersigned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamabad.*

c) *When a litigant residing abroad visits Pakistan and executes power of attorney, then the law, rules and instructions regarding execution and attestation of such document shall apply.*

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d) *If a litigant executes a power of attorney/wakalatnama during his stay in Pakistan, and thereafter goes abroad, the authorized representative shall undergo biometric verification.*

e) *When a person holder of Pakistan Origin Card (POC) files or defends a case and is not represented by an agent or attorney, he shall undergo biometric verification. If, for any reason, his verification is not possible through NADRA/NTL, then he shall produce his POC as well as other identity documents before the Designated Officer and such officer shall satisfy himself about his identity.*

16. BLOCKED, INVALID, EXPIRED OR LOST CNIC

a) *A litigant whose CNIC has been blocked or rendered invalid by NADRA for any legal reason may be exempted from biometric verification subject to:*

   i. *Submission of a NADRA-issued CRC/B-Form or FRC, or passport, or driving license or any other identity document.*

   ii. *Submission of an affidavit sworn by him and duly attested by an Oath Commissioner, with the litigant's photograph, stating: "That the litigant is a citizen of Pakistan and his/her CNIC number [mention number] has been blocked by NADRA due to [mention reason]."*

b) *In case of expired or lost CNIC, a litigant may be exempted from biometric verification subject to:*

   i. *Submission of receipt (regarding application for renewal/re-issuance of CNIC), report of loss lodged with the police, along with passport, driving license, or any other identity document.*

   ii. *Submission of an affidavit sworn by him and duly attested by an Oath Commissioner, with the litigant's photograph, stating: "That the litigant is a citizen of Pakistan and his/her CNIC number [mention number] has expired or been lost."*

c) *The litigant shall appear in person before the Designated Officer at the time of filing, and present the original CNIC (whether invalid or expired) or original receipt (in case of expired or lost) as well as other identity documents for physical identification and such officer shall satisfy himself about his identity by capturing his photograph through web cam and storing/saving his picture in the computer system.*

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17. FOREIGNERS

a) *The person arrested under the Foreigners Act shall be identified by the Investigating Officer or through the documents or modes available to the satisfaction of the Designated Officer or the Court.*

b) *A foreigner filing a case shall provide his passport and/or other documents for his identification to the satisfaction of Designated Officer or the Court.*

c) *The copies of passport or Emergency Travel Document or Refugee/Asylum-related Documents or Proof of Registration (PoR) Card (for Afghan Refugees etc) or Asylum Seeker Certificate (issued by UNHCR or a Competent Authority) or UNHCR Registration Slip/Certificate or Temporary Permission/Stay Permit or Border Pass/Local Entry Permit or Diplomatic Identity Card or court orders etc, shall be annexed to the case.*

18. APPLICATION FOR WITHDRAWAL OF AMOUNT

A person seeking withdrawal of an amount deposited under a court order shall undergo biometric verification.

19. EXEMPTIONS FROM BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION

a) *Where a litigant holds a valid Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) but his fingerprints or thumb impressions are medically or physically non-verifiable, exemption may be granted subject to:*

   i. *Submission of an affidavit sworn by him, duly attested by Oath Commissioner, incorporating the litigant's photograph and stating: "That the fingerprints and thumb impressions of the litigant are not verifiable due to [specified medical/physical disability]."*

   ii. *The litigant shall appear in person before the Designated Officer at the time of filing, presenting the original valid CNIC as well as other identity documents for physical identification and such officer shall satisfy himself about litigant's identity by capturing his photograph through web cam and storing/saving his picture in the computer system.*

   iii. *The aforesaid affidavit shall be annexed to the case file.*

b) *Minors, the persons with mental health conditions, or the persons whose biometrics are not available with NADRA or whose biometric verification is not possible through NADRA, may be exempted from biometric verification as mentioned in the preceding clauses.*

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20. DESIGNATED OFFICERS

a) *At Lahore High Court's Principal Seat and Benches, the officer not below the rank of Assistant Registrar shall be designated for the identification of litigants in cases where their biometric verification is either not possible or they are exempted from the same.*

b) *In the District/Sessions Courts, the Staff Officer to the District & Sessions Judge and in the Civil Courts at the District Headquarters, Clerk of Court (COC) of the Senior Civil Judge shall be designated for the purposes mentioned in the preceding clause.*

c) *At Tehsil Headquarters, the Clerk of Court (COC) attached to the AD&SJ-I and Reader to the Civil Judge-I shall be designated for the aforementioned purpose.*

d) *The Designated Officer shall carry out the identification process through the available documents, affidavits, witnesses, and capturing (through web cam) photographs of the minors, persons with mental health conditions, their guardians or next friends, the persons exempted from biometric verification or the persons whose biometric verification is not possible due to any reason. He shall attach such documents with the case while preserving photographs in a computer system.*

e) *The Designated Officer may, for his satisfaction and true identification, require biometric verification of a close relative of a litigant whose personal biometric verification is not possible for any reason, provided that such other person subjects himself to the verification process with informed consent.*

f) *The Designated Officer shall attach his certificate regarding identification at the top of the case file.*

21. BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION PROCEDURE AND GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

a) Generation of Tracking ID

*For verification, the litigant shall generate a Tracking ID (TID) through Lahore High Court official website (**lhc.gov.pk**) or through the Lahore High Court Biometric Verification Portal (**https://biosystid.lhc.gov.pk/biosystno**) by selecting the option "**Generate Biometric ID**" and entering the requisite particulars.*

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b) Validity of Tracking ID

The generated Tracking ID shall remain valid for forty-eight (48) hours and shall expire automatically thereafter.

c) Visit to NADRA e-Sahulat Centre

The litigant shall, after generation of the Tracking ID, visit any NADRA e-Sahulat Centre/Franchise (in Pakistan) or the biometric facility installed within court premises, along with original CNIC and the printed Tracking ID slip for biometric verification.

d) Verification and Receipt

Upon successful biometric verification, the NADRA e-Sahulat Centre shall issue a verification receipt and update the verification status electronically. After successful verification, a verification receipt shall be issued by e-Sahulat Centre. In case of failure of biometric verification for any reason, the Court shall not be responsible for any financial loss suffered by the litigant.

e) Submission at Filing Counter

The litigant shall attach the verification receipt to the case file.

f) Office Verification

The concerned Court official shall enter the Tracking ID in the Biometric Verification Admin Portal for confirmation, whereupon the system shall automatically confirm the verification status. Upon confirmation, the user shall mark the Tracking ID as "used" and enter the case number/diary number/ institution number in the system and print system-generated verification receipt and append it to the case file.

g) Invalid or Reused Verification

If the biometric verification slip is found to be fake, reused, or invalid, the litigant shall not be permitted to proceed with filing.

h) Validity of Verification

The verification slip issued by the e-Sahulat Centre or verification counter shall remain valid for 48 hours after the transaction (verified or not verified) is completed.

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i) Verification Fee

A prescribed verification fee shall be chargeable for biometric verification, irrespective of whether such verification is conducted at NADRA e-Sahulat Centre located within court premises or at external NADRA e-Sahulat Centre/Franchise.

Note: *The User Manual is attached as Annexure A.*

22. NON-COMPLIANCE

a) *Failure to comply with these SOPs, without a duly granted exemption, shall render the petition or application defective.*
b) *The Office shall issue a deficiency memo and return the case for compliance to institution.*

23. DATA PROTECTION, CONSENT AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

a) *Biometric verification under these SOPs shall be conducted purely for the identification of litigants and the relevant data/information obtained during verification shall not be shared with any person without the consent of the litigant, except where required by law or by an order of a competent court.*
b) *The Lahore High Court shall ensure that a public notice regarding the purpose, scope and limited use of biometric verification is displayed on the official Notice Boards of the Courts and uploaded on the official website of the Court for the awareness of litigants and the general public.*

24. TRAINING OF STAFF

a) *The relevant staff will be trained to operate biometric verification systems, handle Tracking ID generation and verification through the Biometric Verification Admin Portal, and ensure secure handling of biometric data and verification records.*
b) *Such training shall be conducted periodically under the supervision of the IT Wing of the Lahore High Court in coordination with NADRA, and refresher courses shall be arranged to address system upgrades and procedural changes.*

25. REMOVAL OF DIFFICULTIES

In case of any difficulty or emergence of a new situation not expressly covered under these SOPs, the Chief Justice of Lahore High Court shall have the

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authority to make instructions or directions for removal of the difficulty, or for supplying the gap, or meeting new situation(s).

26. REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

The SOPs may be reviewed and amended to keep pace with the changing times and requirements.

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The following applications shall require bio-matric verification at the time of institution/filing before or in a court: -

a) Application for withdrawal of a case
b) Application u/s 12(2) CPC
c) Application for compromise in a case or composition of offence (s)
d) Application for recording statements before or in a court or Magistrate
e) Application for restoration of suits/cases in case of dismissal in default, if filed by a new/fresh lawyer.
f) Application for replacing power of attorney/Wakalat Naama
g) Application dealing in financial matters like deposits or refunds of amounts
i) Application for medical re-examination or constitution of Medical Board
j) Application for dis-internment

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