

LHC reshuffle raises concerns among Rawalpindi lawyers



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By Mian Naveed Afzal Bureau Chief Lahore

RAWALPINDI: While the legal fraternity was still surprised over the upcoming transfers of Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges to provincial high courts, an internal reshuffle in the Lahore High Court (LHC) has concerned lawyers in the garrison city.

The transfer of senior LHC judge Justice Jawad Hassan from the Rawalpindi bench to the Bahawalpur registry is a routine practice, but lawyers expressed surprise that a judge with over a decade of experience in tax, commercial, corporate and international arbitration matters was replaced by a judge appointed as an additional judge last year and recently confirmed as an LHC judge.

The LHC chief justice replaced Justice Hassan with Justice Ahsan Raza Kazmi.

President of the Lahore High Court Bar Association (Rawalpindi Bench), Saeed Yousaf Khan, said that although all judges are equally respectable and knowledgeable, Justice Hassan is an exception.

said Justice Hassan is an expert in international law, constitutional, corporate, tax and commercial law, adding that the Bahawalpur registry does not require such expertise.

He expressed hope that, being an extraordinary jurist, Justice Hassan would write landmark judgments in his area of expertise.

Khan lamented that the Rawalpindi bench, established in the 1980s, initially had a strength of four judges and 32 staff members, adding that after nearly half a century, it still has four judges, though the workforce has increased to 360 officials.

During his posting at the Rawalpindi bench of the Lahore High Court, Justice Jawad Hassan was widely regarded for deciding a substantial number of complex, high-profile commercial, constitutional, tax, defence-related and international commercial arbitration matters, many of which had remained pending for years.

Rawalpindi, closely linked with Islamabad, carries significant institutional and economic importance, hosting major defence establishments as well as leading national corporate groups engaged in energy, construction and public sector enterprises, making its docket particularly sensitive and commercially significant.

Kashif Ali Malik, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan, while speaking to RKI, noted that although Justice Hassan's transfer to Bahawalpur may be a routine administrative matter, it will be felt by both litigants and the legal fraternity of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, who benefited from his efficient handling and timely disposal of high-profile and technically complex disputes, including those involving commercial arbitration.