# THE SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
## MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
## HELD ON JANUARY 01, 2025

**01.** A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held on January 01, 2025 at 03:00 p.m. at Sheikh Muhammad Shafi Hall of the Sialkot Chamber.

**02.** Mr. Ikram Ul Haq, President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry presided over the meeting. He thanked the members for attending the meeting.

**03.** The proceedings of the meeting started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam.

**04.** The following members attended the meeting:

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| • Mr. Ikram Ul Haq | President |
| • Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi | Senior Vice President |
| • Mr. Omer Khalid | Vice President |
| • Mr. Aamer Mahmood | -Member- |
| • Mr. Adnan Safdar | -do- |
| • Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry | -do- |
| • Mr. Haseeb Tahir | -do- |
| • Mr. Jawad Khalid | -do- |
| • Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi | -do- |
| • Ms. Kinza Ijaz | -do- |
| • Mr. Mehtab Maqsood | -do- |
| • Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Asad | -do- |
| • Mr. Muhammad Abid | -do- |
| • Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad | -do- |
| • Mr. Salman Sheikh | -do- |
| • Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam | -do- |
| • Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman | -do- |
| • Mr. Sohail Masood | -do- |
| • Syed Ahtesham Mazhar | -do- |

**05.** **Leave of Absence**

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| • Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik | -Member- |
| • Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan | -do |
| • Mr. Hassan Akbar | -do- |

**06.** **Members who could not attend the meeting**

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| • Syeda Ayesha Wadood | -do- |

**07.** **Special Invitees**

- Malik Naseer Ahmed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Accounts
- Raja Saqib Ashfaq, Chairman Departmental Committee on Beauty Instruments/Personal Car
- Mian Muhammad Sarwar, Chairman Departmental Committee on Gloves.
- Mr. Amer Majid Kapur, Chairman Departmental Committee Sports Goods & Sports Wears, Textile, Apparel, Bags
- Mr. Haji Tariq, Chairman Departmental Committee on Dyrport Shipping

**08.** The Committee offered Fateha for departed souls and passed condolence resolution on the sad demise of the following: -

- Mother of Mr. Sohail Asghar of M/s. Tinopal Surgical
- Mr. Rana Nadeem of M/s. Sara International
- Mr. Sarfraz Dar, Uncle of Mr. Usman Dar.
- Kh. Zahid Hassan Father-in-Law of Mr. Amja Shah of M/s. N.S. Surgical Co.
- Ch. M. Iqbal Zafar Warya, Younger Brother of Ch. Inayat Ullah Warya of M/s. Warya Sports
- Wife of Mr. Shahjahan Majeed of M/s. Primestar Inst.
- Mr. Riaz Ahmed of M/s. A.N. Riaz Brothers
- Mian Javed, Brother of Mian Parvaiz Akhtar of M/s. Satellite Industries

| **09. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on November 30, 2024. |
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**Discussion:**

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired whether the microphone system was functioning properly, to which the President responded affirmatively. He also asked about the matter of traffic signals installed at Quaid-e-Azam Chowk. He asked whether the matter had been taken up with the GOC by writing a letter.

The President stated that Military Police staff had been deployed at the chowk during peak hours to assist the public and manage traffic more effectively.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar stated that appointing an MP to control the traffic would lead to more problems. He suggested that a letter should be written to the GOC to ensure a smooth traffic flow, taking into account the suggestions made in the previous meeting.

**The President suggested that instead of writing a letter, he would request Mr. Khawar Spall, Chairman Garrison Committee, to discuss the issue with the Station Commander which was agreed by Syed Ahtesham Mazhar.**

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar also asked about the installation of Traffic Signals in the city, as discussed in the meeting RPO.

The President replied that it was decided that eight traffic signals would be installed at various locations in the city, which had been installed by the Government. The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce had committed following: -

- To arrange a bulletproof vehicle. The Federal Government had been requested to allocate funds from the Export Development Fund (EDF), and proposal, in this regard, had been submitted. The Commerce Minister had also been approached for support.
- Provision of Rs. 6.1 million for the construction of Thana Kotwali was agreed upon, with the funding to be shared by Sialkot Chamber, SIAL, and Airsial. SIAL had agreed to contribute, so it had been requested to them to contribute Rs. 2.5 million. The remaining amount would be arranged by Airsial and the Sialkot Chamber.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar also asked about the status of complaint of theft of Transformer's copper wire at EPZ made in the meeting with RPO.

The President responded that an FIR had been filed, but no recovery had been made yet. He further mentioned that he had requested the DPO to issue the notice to the concerned police station for regular visit of mobile police over there to prevent such incidents. Additionally, the matter was raised with Mr. Shafey Hussain, Minister of Industry for Punjab. It had been requested to him to issue directives to the relevant department to ensure that such incidents should not occur again.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar requested to create a pressure on the police to take further action in order to expedite the recovery of goods.

**The President agreed and mentioned that the Chamber was not following up on the case because the Chairman and CEO of STAGL were handling the matter. He stated that he would get feedback regarding the FIR from them.**

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired about the progress on the establishment of an EXPO center in Sialkot, which had been assured by the Federal Commerce Minister during a meeting held in this Chamber.

The President stated that a letter had been sent to the Commerce Minister regarding this matter. He also mentioned that a meeting was planned with the Minister of Industry during the second week of January in Islamabad. During this visit, he intended to request Khawaja Asif to arrange a meeting with the Ministry of Commerce as well, to remind him of the commitment to establish an EXPO Center in Sialkot. He added that Khawaja Muhammad Asif had asked him to identify a place for the Expo Center. He had requested Mr. Faisal Ikram to facilitate us, in this regard.

Mr. Omar Khalid stated that the President was actively addressing the issue of traffic. Following the RPO's visit to this Chamber, three additional DSPs had been appointed in Sialkot. He added that a meeting with the DSP Traffic was scheduled in next week, where all related issues would be discussed.

The President stated that a new DSP had been appointed in Sialkot, tasked with removing encroachments in the city. He noted that the DSP had been working efficiently and had been sharing daily updates on WhatsApp. He stated that one of the actions taken by the DSP that had drawn significant criticism on social media about the use of a crane to remove the carts belonging to cart owners. **He added that he would take up this issue with the DSP Encroachment.**

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired about providing information regarding the encroachment.

The President responded affirmatively and encouraged him to share the details to facilitate appropriate action. He mentioned that removing the encroachments was one of the key aspects of Maryam Nawaz's "Saaf Suthra Punjab" initiative. He said that work was being done practically in Punjab under this program.

Sheikh Atiq ur Rahman emphasized the importance of educating children on character building, which encompasses to teach them about road signals, maintaining road cleanliness, and cultivating qualities essential for being a good citizen.

The President expressed appreciated to Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman for inviting attention to this important matter and stated that **a letter would be sent to the Government of Punjab and the Federal Ministry of Education, urging them to initiate awareness education program at the school level.**

The President also mentioned that he had written a letter to the Government of Punjab concerning the substandard food in government school canteens. He stated that the issue was addressed promptly, with instructions issued to the relevant ministry. Another letter was written regarding taking initiative for the vaccination and medical check-up of students in schools, as was done in the

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| past based on the recommendation of doctors. This matter was also addressed promptly. The President emphasized that both the Federal Government and the Punjab Government were actively working on the matter, and their efforts were visible.<br><br>The President stated that Mr. Abdul Rauf had informed him that the Departmental Committee on Education was already working on setting up a curriculum for the character building of children in schools. The details were outlined in the minutes of the meeting, which were attached to the agenda.<br><br>Mr. Abdul Rauf informed that the Departmental Committee on Education had formed an advisory committee to prepare a syllabus focused on the character building of children. The committee comprised the CEO of Education, professors from UMT and GC University, principals of Government Murray College and Islamia College, along with 10 PhD holders. In this regard, six workshops and four meetings had been held. The curriculum was now in its final stage, and once completed, the syllabus would be implemented in all schools across the District of Sialkot. | |
| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman and Mr. Abdul Rauf. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **10. Point discussed.** | Approval of Statement of Accounts for the month of November 2024 and approval of Minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Accounts and Finance held on December 26, 2024 |
| **<u>Discussion:</u>**<br>Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed stated that a Committee Meeting was held on December 26, 2024, where various issues were discussed in detail. Additionally, the vouchers were reviewed in accordance with the SOPs established by the management and were found to be satisfactory. He further mentioned that an amount of Rs. 2.5 million was collected under the delegation fund. The Committee suggested that this matter should be referred to the Fairs & Exhibitions Committee for thorough review and recommendations for adjustment. This suggestion was duly recorded in the minutes of the meeting under point no. 8.<br>Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi replied that the matter would be discussed in Departmental Committee on Fairs & Exhibitions.<br><br>Mr. Salman Sheikh remarked that Sialkot's cottage industries face limited opportunities to showcase their products on various platforms due to the high costs involved. He suggested that the funds could be utilized more effectively to provide diverse platforms for promoting these products.<br><br>The President explained that it was not feasible, as the funds collected from members for an exhibition or delegation would only be considered income of the Chamber once the process was completed. If the delegation had not yet been sent, it raised a question as to whether the funds should be treated as income or refunded to the members. Consequently, the matter had been referred to the Fairs & Exhibitions Committee for discussion with the TDAP to determine if the delegation was still part of their program. He further stated that the Sialkot Chamber had already communicated to the TDAP about the decision not to include any such delegation in their program. He added that according to him, if a delegation did not proceed as planned, the fees should, in principle, be refunded to the members.<br><br>Mr. Shahid Inam said that according to his information, in the delegations that were processed through balloting, fee was not refunded, whether member's | |

name was approved through ballot or not. Secondly, the amount would be refunded to members, in case delegation would not proceed.

Mr. Sohail Masood mentioned that the delegation to Jordan in 2024 was referred to in point number 12 of the account statement.

Mr. Omer Khalid clarified that it should have been the delegation to Jeddah, and this needed to be corrected.

Mr. Sohail Masood expressed concern that an amount of Rs. 534,432 was spent on electricity, gas, and water last month. He inquired about the reasons behind such a high bill despite the installation of a solar system.

Malik Naseer Ahmed said that details of the said amount were mentioned on Page # 8 Point # 20.

The President acknowledged that the solar system was now functioning efficiently. However, there had been a minor issue with its maintenance, which had been resolved by a third-party service provider. The government also revised its energy rates, including adjustments to peak hours, net metering, and other policies. Additionally, the government decided a reduction in benefits by up to 50 percent, which had caused some concerns. Although there might be room for improvement, hence the current bills were deemed acceptable. He added that there might be an issue with the solar panels, which would be resolved or adjusted accordingly.

Mr. Sohail Masood inquired whether it was true that an additional 40 kw solar panel system was required to be installed in order to make the chamber's bill zero.

The President responded that they were not currently considering the project due to the priority of gaining control of the SBCC building. Once charge of SBCC was taken, it would be planned to install solar panels on the building's roof to maximize energy production. The President further noted that electricity demand was increasing daily due to extended working hours, and considering all these factors, additional installations might be necessary, in the future.

Mr. Sohail Masood requested the President to make SBCC project on top priority of his engagement.

The President stated that they were monitoring the progress of the project on a weekly basis. He met the Minister of Industry yesterday, where the topic of the SBCC building possession was discussed. The Ministry of Industry had scheduled another meeting during next week to continue the discussion. They assured their full support to transfer possession in accordance with the documentation.

Mr. Sohail Masood asked about the Fairs & Exhibitions Expense of Rs. 515,940/- as mentioned on page No. 2 in expenditure.

Mr. Omar Khalid stated that Sialkot had established its stall at the Karachi Ideas Exhibition, employing two Chamber staff members, with the expenses incurred specifically for this event.

The President stated that a booth was set up by the Sialkot Chamber to represent the city at the exhibition, without featuring any particular local brand. The products displayed highlighted that they were made in Sialkot, with the Sialkot Chamber as their representative. He emphasized the importance of encouraging exporters to set up their booths at future exhibitions. Mr. Ammar

Khan and Khawaja Shoaib were nominated to attend the event. The feedback received was very positive, and the initiative proved worthwhile, despite the relatively nominal cost of setting up the booth. However, he noted that the travel and accommodation expenses were significant.

Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman expressed his confidence in the President's leadership, particularly in managing matters effectively and implementing cost-cutting measures. He commended the President for conducting a productive meeting with the Federal Ministers while maintaining a firm stance, which he found admirable. He also praised the Vice President for diligently reviewing bills, citing the example of the sound system that was initially estimated to purchase at the cost Rs. 2.7 million but was successfully repaired in Rs. 18,000, with significant saving. He noted that other important matters highlighted in the minutes deserve attention, therefore he requested the President to form a Special Committee who could review these issues comprehensively and identify who was responsible.

The President replied that he along with his Office Bearers were working together as a committee. He mentioned that they had thoroughly reviewed all the issues and found no negative feedback in the routine matters of the Chamber. He also explained that they revisited the issues and introduced new vendors to foster competition, which led to reduced prices in some routine purchases and lower rates overall. He added that similar improvements had been made in the past and emphasized that ongoing improvement could be achieved over time through digitalization and modern technology. He further stated that the Office Bearers and Staff were addressing the matters of this Chamber with a positive and efficient approach. By demonstrating a proactive attitude and thoroughly checking rates across regions from Lahore to Sialkot, we successfully contributed to reduction in prices.

The Secretary General clarified to Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman that the amount of Rs. 2.7 million referred to the quotation for the purchase and installation of a new sound system for the Sheikh Shafi Hall, while the cost of Rs. 18,000 was specifically for the repair of 2-3 speakers only.

The President also provided an update on the repair of speakers, highlighting the working done by Mr. Fraz Ahmed, in this regard, with their approval.

Mr. Adnan Safdar suggested that the quotation system should be followed for purchases, to which Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi responded, affirming that it had indeed been followed.

Mr. Omar Khalid stated that if any member had a vendor related to the Chamber concerning purchases, they could submit their application to the Chamber, as well. He added that sealed quotations from vendors were received and opened in the presence of the Office Bearers and the Secretary General. The order was then awarded to the vendor offering the lowest rate. Additionally, the contact number of each vendor was included on the bill for verification purposes, if needed. Lastly, all previous records were attached to requisitions for the purchase of goods or construction work to maintain transparency and consistency.

Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman mentioned that he received the meeting agenda just one day prior, which left insufficient time for review. He recommended that agenda be distributed to members, at least one week, in advance to allow adequate preparation and study.

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| The President confirmed that agenda would be sent 5 days prior to the meeting.<br><br>Mr. Sohail Masood suggested that the Departmental Committees meetings should be held till 24th, of every month, so that the agenda could be sent to members, well in time.<br><br>The President emphasized that all committee secretaries should ensure their respective committee meetings were held before the 24th of each month to allow sufficient time for the minutes to be finalized for inclusion in the Executive Committee Meeting Agenda. He added that while minutes from meetings held after the 24th should still be finalized, their inclusion in the agenda would depend on necessity. If not required immediately, they could be carried forward to the nerxt month's meeting.<br><br>The Secretary General informed that while the executive agenda was routinely sent to members seven days prior to the meeting, this time there was a delay due to unforeseen circumstances. It was assured that the next agenda would be dispatched seven days in advance, as per the usual practice.<br><br>**Mr. Salman Sheikh pointed out that the wall of prayer room adjacent of to the washroom behind the President's Office was deteriorating and required immediate repair. Secondly, he noted that there were several spelling errors in the accounts statement headings, which should be corrected.**<br><br>Mr. Amer Mahmood inquired about the amount of Rs. 266,000/- listed under the head 'advance to employees.<br><br>Mr. Amer Rashid Wyne responded that this amount was deducted from employees to repay loans previously issued to them. | |
| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Malik Naseer Ahmed, Mr. Sohail Masood, Mr. Shahid Inam, Mr. Adnan Safdar, Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman, Mr. Salman Sheikh, Mr. Amer Mahmood, Secretary General and Mr. Amer Rashid Wyne. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

| **11. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Shipping/Dry port held on December 04, 2024. |
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| **Discussion:**<br>Mr. Tariq Hussain, Chairman of the Committee, expressed his gratitude to the President of SCCI and informed the house that two committee meetings had been held. During these meetings, nine key points were identified, seven of which pertained to the Ministers' meeting and were also discussed in the recent Executive Committee Meeting.<br><br>The President commended Mr. Tariq Hussain for organizing two committee meetings within three months, achieving maximum member participation, and effectively highlighting significant issues concerning the industry.<br><br>Mr. Tariq Hussain elaborated on the identified points which were as follow; -<br><br>• Government claimed of doing efforts for the ease of business community by provide cost effective localize expenses.<br>• The CFS charges in our region for same port services<br>• Charging of sales tax dually.<br>• Requirement of Manual documentation despite online system was initiated by Government & Banks through PSW. | |

- Declaration of Freight Forwarding profession an industry.
- Detention of Containers-Vehicles due to emergency law & order situation in Country.
- Shortage of carrier inventory- Containers
- Initiate the module of consolidation with SDPT & SICTL-Import TP D-consolidation.

**The President responded by requesting him to draft a letter addressing these issues for submission to the relevant ministries. Mr. Tariq Hussain confirmed that the letter had been drafted.**

The President further stated that, once the letters were sent to the respective ministries, follow-ups would be conducted to schedule meetings. He noted that most of the points concerned to the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Shipping & Ports. He also informed the house that the file had already been submitted by hand to the commerce minister during their visit to the Sialkot Chamber, with a meeting request included in the submission. The President assured that he would accompany Mr. Tariq Hussain to the meeting once it was confirmed with the Ministry of Commerce.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired from Mr. Tariq about any information regarding equipment handling charges. He stated that DHL had imposed an additional charge of $166 as equipment handling charges on the nomination container and claimed that DHL Logistics issues such bills at its own discretion.

Mr. Tariq Hussain replied that he did not have any information about it.

Mr. Muhammad Sarwar stated that exporters have shown a lack of interest in this committee, leading to unresolved issues related to exports. He urged the President to encourage members to actively participate in the committee to address these challenges effectively.

The President responded by stating that, based on the attendance, only a certain number of exporters had attended the meeting. In reply, Mr. Sarwar pointed out that only 25% of the attendees were exporters, while the majority were from cargo or shipping-related sectors. He emphasized the need for maximum participation from exporters.

Mr. Tariq Hussain mentioned that under the Customs Act, authorized authorities had the discretion to waive or reduce damage charges. This provision allowed these authorities some flexibility in managing the enforcement of penalties related to damages, possibly based on the circumstances or specific cases presented.

Mr. Amer Majid Kapur expressed concern over the significant increase in FOB charges. He suggested that the relevant authorities should be approached to discuss ways to reduce these charges.

Mr. Tariq Hussain stated that to his knowledge, there was no regulatory body to which complaints could be submitted. If such a body existed, there was no information available about whom to approach for filing complaints. He also noted that the Minister of Ports and Shipping had never visited Sialkot. Therefore, he suggested that the Chamber should invite the Minister to address these concerns and provide clarity on the matter. Mr. Tariq Hussain further added that he had taken note of this issue and would explain it, in detail, during the next meeting.

**Mr. President directed that a letter should be written to the Minister of Ports and**

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| **Shipping to discuss this issue in detail, seek their input, and request a viable solution.** | |
| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Amer Majid Kapur, Mr. Adnan Safdar, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Mr. Muhammad Sarwar and Mr. Tariq Hussain. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **12. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Beauty Instruments/Personal Care Industry held on December 05, 2024. |

**Discussion:**

Raja Saqib Ashfaq, Chairman Departmental Committee on Beauty Instruments said that it was the first meeting of the Committee wherein following points were discussed.

- Inclusion of Exhibitions in the TDAP Annual Calendar. It was recommended that region-wise exhibitions would be selected and then the letter would be written to TDAP for the inclusion of region-wise exhibitions in the Annual Calendar TDAP.
- The matter of HS Codes for the Beauty Instruments/Personal Care Sector. The Committee recommended that a letter would also be written to the concerned Ministry regarding the declaration of separate HS Codes of the Beauty Instruments sector and a meeting would also be arranged with the concerned Minister to present the case for better understanding after consulting with the President Sialkot Chamber.

Raja Saqib Ashfaq informed that a letter had been sent by Mian Imran Akbar, the former President to the Federal Minister regarding this matter.

**The President appreciated Mr. Saqib Ashfaq and mentioned that he had referred the suggestion for the inclusion of the exhibition, as recommended by the Committee to Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi for writing a letter to TDAP. Additionally, he had personally requested the DG of TDAP to keep them informed about upcoming exhibitions, such as Cosmo Proof Beauty and others, for their consideration on which ones to participate in. He also mentioned that it should be confirmed whether the letter had been written; if not, it should be sent accordingly.**

Raja Saqib Ashfaq requested the President to address the matter of the HS Code with the Ministry of Industries during his visit to them.

**In response, the President requested the Secretariat to provide a copy of the letter previously written by Mian Imran Akbar on this subject to take further necessary action.**

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| **Participants** | The President and Mr. Raja Saqib Ashfaq. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **13. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on WAPDA Sui Gas held on December 09, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **14. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Banking & Finance held on December 09, 2024. |

**Discussion:**

Mr. Amir Mahmood highlighted that the financial instruments issued by the bank against exports carried a validity of one year. In cases where shipment delay occurred and an extension was requested, the bank typically referred the matter to the State Bank. He emphasized that applying for an extension involved extensive documentation requirements. Mr. Mahmood suggested that this issue should be included as a discussion point for the Banking Committee's meeting with the Governor or staff of the State Bank.

Mr. Murad Arshad requested the President to convene a meeting with the State Bank authorities to address the following issues:

- Mr. Arshad highlighted concerns regarding the requirement to submit supporting shipment documents within a strict timeframe of 10 days, even for open consignments where payments were typically received 120 days after shipment. He mentioned that banks impose penalties on members who fail to meet this deadline. He also noted that the PSW (Pakistan Single Window) system was a centralized platform integrating stakeholders such as the State Bank and Customs authorities.
- He raised the issue of overdue payments that remain in accounts due to mistakes, which were often dealt with under the Money Laundering and Terrorism Act, causing additional complications for members. He shared his own case of overdue payment.

Mr. Adnan Safdar also addressed the delay or non-issuance of financial instruments by the bank, which led to members incurring additional damage charges.

Mr. Amer Majeed Kapur discussed the matter of advance payments for temporary imports. He said that the standard practice globally follows a 30-70 ratio—30% paid in advance through TT (Telegraphic Transfer) and 70% settled against the Bill of Lading (BL). However, in Pakistan's banking system, the advance payment limit is restricted to a maximum of 25,000 USD. It is suggested that this restriction of 25,000 USD be removed to align with international practices.

**The President acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed to arrange a meeting with the State Bank authorities to address these matters. He said that Chairman of the Banking Committee should arrange a meeting with the State Bank's representative in this Chamber. The agenda should include discussion on the demurrage charges for temporary imports caused by delays in financial instruments. Additionally, he recommended presenting the case of Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti as a case study to bring it to attention and claim the relevant issues. He further shared that he had met the Governor State Bank yesterday in Islamabad during the 'Uran Pakistan' program, where he extended an invitation to the Governor to visit Sialkot, which was accepted. An official invitation letter had been sent to the Governor State Bank and hopefully he would visit this month.**

Miss Kinza Ijaz highlighted another issue, stating that when a shipment was sent to a customer on an open account with a default time of 120 days, the bank's lack of cooperation, even when an extension was requested, posed a significant challenge. She proposed that the process be streamlined for exporters by having the State Bank establish a portal, checklist, or unified document submission system. This would allow all stakeholders to submit their requests and resolve such issues efficiently, eliminating the need for repeated follow-ups with banks.

The President replied that the Department was reluctant to extend the time limit from 120 to 180 days.

Miss Kinza Ijaz suggested that exceptions should be allowed in special cases, such as when a customer returns goods.

**The President requested that this point be included in the upcoming meeting with the Chief Manager of the State Bank. Additionally, he confirmed Miss Kinza's participation in the meeting and asked both Mr. Murad Arshad and Miss Kinza to bring their cases to the meeting, to be discussed as examples.**

Mr. Omar Khalid provided an overview of the process for reviving a financial instrument (FI) and handling overdue payments. He highlighted that the revival process involves minimal documentation, with the bank reaching out to the client directly when an FI expires. In cases where the State Bank's involvement was required, it could be revived with just one click. Additionally, he clarified that overdue payments were governed by the Anti-Money Laundering Act, not the Terrorist Financing Act. If a payment remained overdue for more than a year, it was deferred. If it remained unpaid for a second consecutive year, the bank took further action, such as making a call to seek an explanation.

Mr. Murad Arshad confirmed that the 'Terrorist Financing Act' was indeed mentioned, as he had studied it.

Mr. Umair Nisar explained that it was a global law of the United Security Council wherein it was mentioned that Anti-Money Laundering/ Anti- terrorism financing Act and the money which had no justification/trail covered under this law.

He said that according to the State Bank, exports must be conducted through the same channel used to receive payment. He explained that if a company received payment through the bank and had to complete the export using Export Form E, but then exported the goods via DHL, this would be considered an illegal act by the State Bank. He suggested that there was a need to find a solution in case any exporter made such a mistake.

Mr. Murad Arshad agreed on point of Mr. Umair Nisar.

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| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Murad Arshad, Mr. Adnan Safdar, Mr. Amer Mahmood, Mr. Amir Majid Kapur, Miss Kinza Ijaz and Mr. Umair Nisar. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **15. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Surgical Instruments/ Cutlery Sector and Allied Industries held on December 11, 2024. |

**<u>Discussion</u>**

Mr. Salman Sheikh said that following points were discussed in the meeting:

- Discussion on Establishment of Material Testing Lab, EPZ (PC-1).
- Introduction of Newly established Notifying Body for MDR Certification based in Pakistan. A seminar was also held in this regard.
- Identification of Exhibitions related to Surgical Instruments/ Cutlery Sector & Allied Industries to be included in the TDAP annual plan.

The President stated that positive progress was made in the meeting. He emphasized that they were now awaiting the selection of a cost-effective notified body and consultants, who had been thoroughly vetted. He expressed hope that in the next meeting, the good news of launching an affordable notified body in Sialkot would be shared. This initiative was seen as necessary because the fee of notified bodies from Europe and other regions were prohibitively expensive. The proposals given to exporters for MDR were financially unfeasible, and there was pressure to sign them despite the costs. If a more affordable notified body could be introduced, it would allow exporters to

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| switch, potentially saving millions of dollars and euros for the surgical industry. | |
| **Participants** | The President and Mr. Salman Sheikh. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **16. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of joint meeting of the Departmental Committee on Sales Tax/PRA and Shipping Dry Port held on December 13, 2024. |

**<u>Discussion</u>**

The President said that a joint meeting of Departmental Committee on Sales Tax/PRA and following points were discussed in the meeting:

- To brief members on terms of understanding with Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) in respect of PRA Notices issued to members of Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan (ACAAP) as settled in the meetings held with Mr. Nouman Yousuf, Chairman PRA, and Mr. Zaigham Abbas, Commissioner PRA Gujranwala.
- To update on the matter of PRA's Compulsory Registration Notices to Sialkot Chamber.

Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman raised the concern that businesses have not received their sales tax refunds for the past six months.

The President responded that the government was actively working on this issue, and they expect that refunds would be issued by January or February 2025.

Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman also pointed out that the government had only partially refunded DLTL (Duty Drawback of Local Taxes and Levies) cases, rather than issuing full refunds.

The President assured that the government had established a time frame for processing these refunds, and it was part of their financial management strategy to ensure that refund cases were cleared soon.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar stated that a 16% sales tax was being levied by the Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) when funds were transferred, along with bank charges.

The President said that the Punjab Revenue Authority had instructed to all the institutions to charge against the services. Their objective was to collect revenue against services. He said that what extent it could be opposed. No doubt that the problems were increasing, but when charges were observed, it were very small in terms of percentage. They were charging 16 percent of the service charge. The President was of the view that the government was reducing its involvement in various sectors and focusing on tax collection rather than providing incentives. Businesses or individuals should focus on increasing their own sales to adapt to the new economic environment.

The President stated that during the meeting with the Finance Minister in this Chamber, the discussion was not limited to the FTR. He also presented the Chamber's position on overall taxes, emphasizing that the business community of Sialkot was overburdened compared to the rest of Pakistan.

The President shared that, during a press conference held this Sunday in Kamalia, the Finance Minister appreciated the Sialkot Chamber and its stance. The Minister also acknowledged that the Government was reviewing the suggestions and requests submitted by the Sialkot Chamber with great respect

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| and consideration.<br><br>Furthermore, the President mentioned that during his visit to the Prime Minister's Secretariat in Islamabad yesterday, he met with the relevant officials. As a reminder, he handed over all the minutes of the discussions held in Sialkot. He expressed gratitude for their visit to Sialkot, and in response, the officials reassured him that they were already working gradually on the Chamber's suggestions. |

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| **Participants** | The President and Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

| **17. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Young Entrepreneurs held on December 16, 2024. |
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**Discussion:**

Mr. Murad Arshad expressed his concern regarding the Trade Consultant of M/s. Famy Commercio, who presented their product during the seminar. He stated that their primary focus appeared to be selling their product rather than providing substantial or specific knowledge, as he observed during his discussion with Mr. Muhammad Yasin, the Trade Consultant of M/s. Famy Commercio. Mr. Murad Arshad said that if the consultancy company got the Chamber's Hall on rent to organize a program, that was a separate matter, but if a company organized a seminar or program in collaboration with the Chamber's committee, then it should be scrutinized of their product first to see whether they would be able to deliver to our members or not. He said that the credibility of these companies should be checked and proper scrutiny should be done so that there should not be question mark on the Chamber.

Mr. Omar Khalid briefed that Muhammad Yasin Sahib, formerly a commercial counsellor in Brazil, had retired and established a firm named M/s. Famy Commercio. The firm specialized in providing customized market entry solutions and development services for foreign companies seeking to enter the Pakistani market. Based in Islamabad, the company offered tailored made solutions for trade, import, and export markets globally, charging a service fee of US$ 100. During our discussion, it became evident that they were not familiar with the Sialkot market. When inquired about the export potential of the surgical and other industries, they requested time to prepare a feasibility report, which they assured would be presented to us. It was also clarified that their intent was not to sell their products via the platform of this Chamber, and even if they had such an aspiration, they were not successful in doing so.

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| **Participants** | Mr. Omer Khalid and Mr. Murad Arshad. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

| **18. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Military Uniform & Badges held on December 20, 2024. |
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**Discussion:**

Mr. Murad Arshad highlighted that the military uniform industry encompasses not just badges but also a wide range of items. He pointed out that only 2% of military items were currently exported from Pakistan, underscoring the significant untapped potential of the sector. Mr. Murad mentioned that TDAP had previously organized an exhibition in Germany regarding badges industry around four or five years ago. However, no such exhibition had been held since then. He requested the President to approach TDAP to include the badges industry in their upcoming exhibition calendar.

**The President endorsed and suggested to forward this request to Departmental Committee on Fairs & Exhibitions for further necessary action.**

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| **Participants** | The President and Mr. Murad Arshad. |

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| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **19. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Gloves Industry held on December 20, 2024. |

**Discussion:**

Mr. Muhammad Sarwar expressed his gratitude to the President for electing him as Chairman. He noted that although this was the first introductory meeting of the committee, the members held a detailed discussion on various points related to the industry, all of that were recorded in the meeting minutes. He highlighted that our industry faced the same challenges as others, such as labor issues and the availability of facilities. He emphasized that the gloves industry was extensively encompassing various types, including working gloves, motorbike gloves, and more. He also pointed out that this industry was among the most valuable, with a collective export volume of approximately 800 million dollars.

Mr. Muhammad Sarwar proposed the following recommendations to the President for implementation to improve the gloves industry:

- He suggested to organize study tours to China and Vietnam for members to observe the latest developments and technologies in the gloves sector. The industry in Pakistan still relies on old sewing technology, some of which has been in use for over 70 years. By observing advancements in other countries, the industry can benefit from modern techniques.
- Got the permission from SIDC so that we the members might visit as a delegation and see how beneficial it would for gloves industry.
- Sialkot, being a cottage industry hub, should establish a joint Research and Development (R&D) sector to assist industries in product development. He proposed that discussions could be held with the government to secure funding from the Export Development Fund (EDF) to set up such a project.
- LPDI, a subsidiary of the Pakistan Gloves Association, organizes various leather-related programs. Mr. Sarwar urged the Sialkot Chamber to support LPDI in obtaining funding from organizations like USAID, JICA, and Germany to conduct technical training courses for workers, benefiting industries like surgical, leather, gloves, and football.
- He highlighted labor issues and suggested discussions with the government to provide educational opportunities for workers, including degrees up to the matriculation level. This would help elevate the status of laborers and make them recognized as educated and respectable members of society.
- He recommended that the labor department be tasked with educating workers about their responsibilities in factories, emphasizing their importance to the industry.
- He also proposed the creation of a material bank where industries could procure necessary materials, potentially reducing costs and improving efficiency.

Mr. President expressed his appreciation to Mr. Muhammad Sarwar for his thorough preparation and for presenting the points related to the industry. He invited Mr. Sarwar to visit his office to further discuss these points, and tasked the Concerned Secretary with taking the necessary actions for implementation.

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| **Participants** | The President and Mr. Muhammad Sarwar |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **20 Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Sports Goods & Sports Wears, Textile, Apparel, Bags held on December 21, 2024. |

**Discussion:**
Mr. Amir Majeed Kapur stated that the committee had recommended a plan for the visit to SIDC, in line with the suggestion made by Mr. Muhammad Sarwar on behalf of his committee. He emphasized that both committees should collaborate to plan and execute the visit.

The President responded by suggesting that the visit be planned according to his availability, so he could also join them for the visit. He added that it had also been planned to visit MIDC and TEVTA but could not visit due to some other engagements.

Mr. Amir Majeed Kapur informed the house that following points were discussed in the meeting for further working and the betterment of the industry:-

- Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS)
- Social Compliance and Certification
- Research & Development
- Product Knowledge
- Price War
- Training of Exhibiters
- Establishment of Unit of Imported Raw Materials
- Exhibitions & Trade Delegations
- Material Testing Lab.
- Skilled Workforce
- Payment Issue from Russia
- Fix Tax Regime

He briefly explained the points which were mentioned in the minutes of the meeting.

The President stated that any member faced payment issues related to exports to Russia could directly contact the Chief Manager of the State Bank or the Banking Committee Chairman of the Sialkot Chamber. He further informed that the Bank of Punjab had been authorized to handle payments to Russia.

Mr. Muhammad Sarwar stated that, based on his information, not only the Bank of Punjab but several other banks were also involved in handling payments related to Russia.
The members also discussed the supply of goods to Russia. It was noted that parcels to Russia were currently handled exclusively by the Pakistan Post Office, which often took a considerable amount of time for delivery. Therefore, it was suggested to explore alternative courier services, such as DHL, to ensure faster and more efficient delivery.

The President replied that the matter was related to sanctions concerning the war zone area.

Mr. Amir Majeed Kapur appreciated the President to present the case of FTR wonderfully before Federal Minister Finance during his visit to Sialkot.

Mr. Omer Khalid stated that the Senior Vice President (SVP) had also planned to visit the SIDC, and he would request the SVP to coordinate with them for organizing a delegation visit to SIDC.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar said that there was not any issue to visit SIDC, anybody could visit there.

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| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Mr. Amir Majeed Kapur and Mr. Muhammad Sarwar. |

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| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **21. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting on issue of 5 % Withholding Sales Tax held on November 28, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **22. Point discussed.** | Approval of Report of Seminar on How to Develop Sialkot's IT Industry for Global Exports held on December 03, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **23. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Human Resource held on December 07, 2024. |

**Discussion:**

The President stated that during the last executive meeting, members raised concerns regarding the retirement age, whether it should be 60 or 65 years. They inquired about how and why this decision was made, the rationale behind it, and whether it aligned with the organization's regulations. In response, he had assured them that he would address their concerns and provide clarity in the next executive meeting after reviewing the matter thoroughly.

The President further informed that the HR Committee was convened on December 7, 2024, wherein a detailed discussion took place regarding all pertinent issues, and the following decisions were made:

- The Committee after due deliberation and discussion recommended to fix the retirement age of SCCI staff of 60 years as per the regulations of the Government of Pakistan Human Resource Policy 2022 for the whole staff.

  Due to fixing of retirement age of SCCI staff 60 years two of SCCI staff were affected i.e. Mr. Tariq Mahmood Malik, Secretary General and Mr. M. Sarwar, Qasid as age of both persons had exceeded the age of 60 years. So, the Committee had decided to reappoint/extend service of Mr. Tariq Mahmood Malik, Secretary General in his existing pay scale and entitlements w.e.f. March 16, 2024 and continue his services for one year i.e March 15, 2025. The service of Mr. Muhammad Sarwar, Qasid extended till March 31, 2025 as a final extension.

  Mr. Rehmat Ali who had retired many years ago and was working in the Membership on contract basis time to time. The Committee also recommended that the contract of Mr. Rehmat Ali would not be renewed after completion of existing contract and his retirement shall be confirmed final.
- HR Committee comprised of three sitting Office Bearers and the Secretary General.

  The Committee recommended to include more members as "Special Invitees" in Departmental Committee on Human Resource, therefore following members were suggested as Special Invitees.
    - Mr. Riaz Ud Din Sheikh
    - Dr. M. Aslam Darr
    - Dr. Nouman Idris Butt
    - Mr. Majid Raza Bhutta
    - Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti

  It was also recommended that the aforementioned special invitees be authorized to provide advice on any specific agenda points to be discussed from time to time. Therefore, it was approved to form the

"President's Advisory Committee" consisting of the three current Office Bearers, Mr. Riaz ud Din Sheikh, Dr. M. Aslam Darr, Dr. Nouman Idris Butt, Mr. Majid Raza Bhutta and Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti.

- HR Committee also recommended to form an Interview Committee comprising the under mentioned members. Any three special invitee members would be mandatory for conducting interview
    - 3 Sitting Office Bearers
    - The Secretary General
    - Dr. M. Aslam Darr
    - Dr. Nouman Idris Butt
    - Mr. Majid Raza Bhutta
    - Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti
    - Mr. Khawar Anwar Khawaja
    - Khawaja Masud Akhtar

The President obtained the house's approval for the recommendation he presented, as detailed mentioned in the minutes of the Human Resource Meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved by the house.

A member acknowledged Mr. Rehmat Sahib's experience and efficient work and inquired if any other staff members had been trained to take over his duties once he completes his job. The President responded that in the previous Executive Committee meeting, approval was granted for new appointments. Tests for various positions had been conducted, and the next step was to hold interviews. The Executive Committee had approved the interview committee, and interviews for the candidates who took the tests would be conducted soon aiming to fill positions where staff was needed. He said that in the next meeting information about the appointment of new staff would be shared.

Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry inquired if the term of the Secretary General would end in March 2025, and the President confirmed yes. He further asked if the Secretary General would retire after that, to which the President stated that no final decision had been made. The President added that if another HR Committee meeting would held and if they decide to grant an extension, it would be provided. However, if no extension is decided, the Secretary General might be considered retired.

Mr. Salman Sheikh inquired about the duration of the extension. In response, the President stated that it could be for one year.

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| **Participants** | The President, Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry and Mr. Salman Sheikh. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **24. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting on Visit of Mr. Tayyab Hafeez Cheema, Regional Police Officer (RPO) held on December 07, 2024 |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **25. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of Departmental Committee on Engineering & Auto Parts held on December 10, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **26. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting with Commissioner Gujranwala held on December 13, 2024. |
| **Discussion:** | |

The President briefed the house about the situation concerning the Sialkot Tannery Zone. He said that an inquiry was carried out by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The Commissioner of Gujranwala had enforced a ban on the sale and purchase of plots in the Tannery Zone, which stayed in place until approval from the Committee formed by him. The Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot issued a report based on the Commissioner's directives, uncovering irregularities in distribution of plots within the zone. The issues stemmed from misleading actions of a group called the "Mutasreen Tannery Zone."

The President said that multiple meetings were held with the Mutasreen Tannery Zone and their leader, Mr. Tahir Shafique Mughal, who was found to be misleading others and being influenced by individuals opposed to the Chamber. These individuals were reportedly driven by political motives that conflicted with the Chamber's interest. He noted that over 90 percent of the matters discussed were based on falsehood. One of the key reasons for the non-completion of the Tannery Zone, according to him, was the government's inability to install a grid station in the Tannery Zone. Due to the lack of electricity, people were unable to carry out any work there.

The President mentioned that certain matters had been revised, including the reduction of members on the STAGL Board from 22 to 12, which was approved by the allottees. An exit policy was implemented, allowing allottees who wished to return their plots to do so, voluntarily. This policy received approval from the Commissioner of Gujranwala. As per the exit policy, applications of plot holders of over 100 kanal had been received. The President said that the Commissioner of Gujranwala had issued an order stating that:

- Applications should be submitted to the Sialkot Chamber individually. The Sialkot Chamber would process the applications and forwarded them to the Tannery Zone and DC Sialkot.
- The DC would first verify with the Environment Department whether the applicant owned a tannery. If the applicant had a tannery, the inquiry would determine if it was a personal or rented tannery.
- In cases where the applicant did not own a tannery and requested a plot to establish one, they would be considered only if there were remaining plots available.

The President announced that he successfully convinced the Commissioner of Gujranwala to lift the ban on the sale and purchase of plots in STAGL. As a result, the Commissioner advised the Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot to arrange a meeting with the Sialkot Tannery Zone management, led by the President of SCCI. This meeting was held, where the Commissioner of Gujranwala's order was officially announced. All applications submitted by members to the Sialkot Chamber were processed and reported to the Deputy Commissioner. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the Environment Department officer to follow up and verify the tannery on-site. A second meeting with the ADCR was subsequently held, where the Environment Department was again instructed to submit their report promptly. The President shared that cheques were collected from all applicants. It was anticipated that approximately 50% of the payments would be received in January, provided that the applications were approved. The remaining 50% of the payment would be divided over one year with some applicants providing monthly cheques and others providing cheques for three months. The total amount of cheques received amounting Rs. 73crores & 20 lacs.

The President emphasized that there was a follow-up on the release of funds

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| from the EDF for the Solar System and the completion of the Waste Treatment Plant. A meeting was scheduled with the DG-TDAP in the coming days to discuss this further.<br><br>The President clarified that those who claimed to be victims were not, in fact, victims. He stated that the real victims were the individuals who had purchased plots and invested in them over the past several years, as they were the ones facing challenges.<br><br>The President shared that report of UNIDO was also presented wherein it was mentioned by the UNIDO that if UNIDO would provide funding to other such projects, it would follow the model of the Sialkot Tannery Zone and present it as a role model for progress.<br><br>The President expressed recognition for Mr. Salman, Mr. Umair, Mr. Faraz, Mr. Ammar, and Miss Nida from the Sialkot Chamber team, who continued working with him at late office hours. Mr. Atif, PD STAGL also provided every kind of information which he demanded from him. Ch. Zulfiqar A. Hayat, Malik Naseer Ahmed and Syed Ahtesham Mazhar also cooperated and supported him. He also mentioned the support of Mr. Muhammad Kashif, Mr. Sh. Saeed Nasir, Hafiz Fraz Dar, Baba Qasim and other friends also supported him.<br><br>Syed Ahtesham Mazhar said that the Political Leadership had also extended support in the project. | |
| **Participants** | The President and Syed Ahtesham Mazhar. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **27. Point discussed.** | Approval of Report of Seminar on Islamic Lecture given by Molana Abdul Habib Attari held on December 14, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **28. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting with Deputy Commissioner Sialkot held on December 16, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **29. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of Mr. Mahesh Mishra, Group Head Trade & Economy and Political Counsellor and his team Members from British High Commission held on December 17, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **30. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting on Visit of Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Federal Minister for Defence, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue and Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce held on December 19, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **31. Point discussed.** | Approval of Report of Awareness Session on Maryam Ki Dastak, Platform held on December 21, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **32. Point discussed.** | Approval of Report of Seminar on Importance of Leather Working Group Certification held on December 23, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **33. Point** | Approval of minutes of meeting with Mr. Anwar ul Haq Kakar & |

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| **discussed.** | Mr. S.M. Tanveer held on December 24, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **34. Point discussed.** | Approval of report of Seminar Regarding Trade with Brazil held on December 26, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **35. Point discussed.** | Minutes of the Meeting of Departmental Committee on Education at SCCI on December 27, 2024. |
| **<u>Discussion:</u>**<br>Mr. Salman Sheikh informed that the committee had renewed several scholarship cases during this meeting and approved new cases after thorough scrutiny. He further mentioned that the committee was actively working on education-related matters, and the detail was mentioned in the minutes of meeting.<br><br>Mr. Omar Khalid asked Abdul Rauf if he had spoken to the Chairman Committee regarding the education bills, as the bills that were presented to him for signature last month were either incomplete or hand-drawn.<br><br>Mr. Abdul Rauf responded that the President had written a letter to the Chairman regarding this matter. Subsequently, the Chairman Committee developed a form outlining how the bills should be presented. However, if there were any further issues or updates, the same might be informed to him so that the necessary adjustments could be made accordingly. | |
| **Participants** | Mr. Omer Khalid, Mr. Salman Sheikh and Mr. Abdul Rauf. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **36. Point discussed.** | Minutes of Meeting of Departmental Committee on IT & Cyber Crime held on December 28, 2024. |
| **<u>Discussion :</u>**<br>Mr. Omar Khalid stated that this was the first meeting of the committee, during which it was decided to address various issues related to the IT industry in different phases. In the initial phase, the committee would focus on conducting a feasibility study concerning IT exports. He further informed that the work had already commenced under his supervision, and upon completion, the findings would be presented to the house. Secondly, we had planned to develop a mobile application for the Sialkot Chamber to enhance communication and update member information, pending approval from the house. He elaborated that the app's development would be carried out in three phases. This application aimed to streamline updates, notifications, and member services, ensuring the efficient dissemination of information. He sought the members' guidance to implement this initiative effectively. Mr. Omer shared that during the previous executive committee meeting, he had discussed the integration of the attendance machine with the Accounts Software for calculating overtime for the lower staff in the chamber. He further informed that the work on this project had been completed and the machine would be installed & functional soon. | |
| **Participants** | Mr. Omer Khalid. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

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| **37. Point discussed.** | Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Membership/Bye-Laws held on December 28, 2024. |
| **Approval** | Approved. |

**<u>Any Other Point:</u>**

**38.** Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Chairman Departmental Committee on Fairs and Exhibitions/Delegations mentioned that no meeting of the Committee was held this month due to ongoing preparations for the Single Country Exhibition (SCE) in Jeddah. He referred to repeated meetings with the Director General of TDAP Sialkot to discuss related issues and recommendations. He stated that SCCI initially withdrew from the SCE due to the non-selection of the complete list shared by SCCI. However, after approval from the Minister of Commerce during his visit to Sialkot, based on the complete list, it was decided to participate in the SCE in Jeddah.

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Committee highlighted that a meeting was held with the Director General and the concerned officer dealing with the SCE in Jeddah at the Karachi Office. During the meeting, the marketing and advertisement plan for the delegation was sought from TDAP. TDAP shared the plan, including outreach to the prospective list they already had. It was recommended that TDAP should focus on the Saudi Franchise Expo and instruct the Trade and Investment Officers in KSA to visit the exhibition and promote the upcoming SCE in Jeddah. The Chairman also suggested that TDAP should initiate social media marketing for the event, similar to the strategies employed by Canton Fair and Arab Health organizers. TDAP requested that the recommendations be provided to it in written form, emphasizing the need to invite all concerned Chambers in the Gulf Region to the event.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi mentioned that SCCI had inquired about the activities and seminars planned for the Sialkot Chamber at the exhibition so that preparations could be made accordingly. These preparations include a write-up on Sialkot's industry and the display of SCCI's documentary. He also mentioned that a meeting with the Chairman of AirSial Limited was held regarding a special low cost package for SCE participants from Sialkot. The Chairman was kind enough to offer a special price of PKR 120,000, which included 40 kg of baggage, with a direct flight from Sialkot to Jeddah. This information would be shared with the participants from Sialkot.

The Chairman also discussed recommendations from the Departmental Committee on Beauty Care Instruments regarding the proposal to include CosmoProf, Italy, in TDAP's Annual Business Plan. This would be discussed with TDAP to ensure its inclusion. He further mentioned that a Zoom meeting was held with the Pakistani Ambassador to Vietnam, during which the Ambassador shared details about a buyer delegation from the sectors of food processing, footballs, and fire extinguishers visiting Pakistan. The Chairman proposed that the delegation should visit Pakistan during the Engineering and Healthcare Show in April 2025 to facilitate factory visits and meetings with relevant businesses.

The Chairman also shared that a meeting with the Minister of Commerce was expected to discuss policy matters related to fairs and exhibitions/delegations, the organization of a Sialkot-specific expo in Canada, USA, and Mexico in the context of the upcoming Football World Cup, and pending issues related to the SCE in Jeddah.

Mr. Muhammad Sarwar stated that SCCI had decided to discourage delegations from the Chamber and focus on exhibitions. He referred to the recently announced trade delegation for surgical instruments to New Zealand and Australia by TDAP and recommended that SCCI should remain involved in the selection process to ensure transparency and avoid complaints or biased selections.

The Chairman replied that, as per TDAP's policy, participation in delegations would be discouraged, while exhibition participation would be enhanced. He proposed that the budget utilization for TDAP be redirected towards trade exhibitions to increase participation from Sialkot, with a 70% subsidy for participants attending private exhibitions of their choice. He suggested that any delegations announced should be referred to or managed by the relevant sector's Association.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad mentioned that he had served as Chairman of the Trade Exhibition and Delegation Committee at SIMAP. He expressed concern that SIMAP (Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan) was not taken on board for the delegation, nor were they consulted during the selection process. He stated that SIMAP was developing a policy to ensure Association's involvement in the selection and execution process for trade delegations. If this policy was not adopted by TDAP, SIMAP would highlight the matter through SCCI.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi emphasized that SIMAP, like SCCI, should propose trade delegations by identifying target countries in their Annual Business Plan. He recommended adopting the same criteria used by SCCI to ensure transparency in advertisement, application processing, selection, and execution authority.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad reiterated his intent to pursue this matter through SIMAP and, if unsuccessful, seek assistance from the SCCI President to arrange a meeting with TDAP officials to establish an effective policy.

The President of SCCI announced plans to call a meeting with all office bearers of Trade Associations at the Chamber to discuss multiple agendas, including the execution of trade delegations by Trade Associations. He noted that since the Chamber had discontinued its trade delegations, this was a right time for Trade Associations to benefit. He added that if Trade Associations fail to materialize delegations in time, other Chambers across Pakistan would take advantage of these opportunities.

**39.** Mr. Adnan Safdar inquired about the status of EPZ.

The President replied that he had discussed the matter with Mr. Shafay Hussain, the Minister of Industries Punjab, on the following four points and requested approval, which was agreed upon:-

- Plots cancellation should be restored which had been restored for one year.
- 10% penalty was imposed to resale the plots which was waived off after through discussion and clarification.
- There was a 10% late construction charge. He requested that these charges be waived, but the department declined and insisted it would apply the charges. He then asked if they could, at least, reduce the charges, if not fully waive it. They promised to decrease the charge, with the reduction expected to be between 3-5%. The President stated that he would continue to make further requests to completely waive off the charges.
- Regarding the sewerage and development charges, they declined to withdraw from their stance. However, he requested some time to discuss the matter further with the members to determine the next steps.

The President shared that a request was made for the construction of a boundary wall, which the Department confirmed that it would be started at the end of January, 2025 and would be completed accordingly. Additionally, it was requested that security cameras and street lights be installed. In response, the authorities stated that they would provide assistance, after the allottees deposited the development and sewerage charges. However, it was also suggested by the department that it was the responsibility of the allottees to construct their plots and install security cameras. The President stated that the minutes of the meeting would be received from the department within the next week. He expressed hope that the minutes would accurately reflect the information he had shared.

The house appreciated the President on his efforts, in this regard.

The President also acknowledged the efforts of former Presidents and staff for dedicating their time to the projects and ensuring the smooth progress of related matters. He expressed hope that the issues relating to the EPZ Project would be resolved within 2-3 months.

**40.** Mr. Omar Khalid mentioned that there was some vacant land near Fly Dubai in Sialkot Chamber, which we leased out through an agreement. However, those who got the space from us had not yet developed anything on this land. We intended to take possession of this area by giving one month's notice, as per the agreement, because the President had mentioned in his address that he would also undertake a medical store project during his tenure. We had planned a medical store at this location inside the Chamber building. He sought approval from the House to authorize the officer bearers to reclaim the possession of that land by giving one month's notice.

**The house unanimously approved to get possession of the space to establish Medical Store over there.**

The President had outlined plans for a new medical store project, which aimed to offer medicines at a discount of 14-15% to everyone. He mentioned that the necessary checks and preparations had been completed regarding the project, and if they secure the space, they would build the store within two months. He mentioned that the initial step involved was setting up the medical store and inviting a government inspector from the district health office for an inspection. The inspector would visit the site and, if approved, a license would be granted. Subsequently, we would need to hire a qualified B pharmacist. All these formalities would be completed within 30 days to setup the medical store. We required a funding of Rs. 40 million for this project. This amount would be allocated as follows: Rs. 20 million for stock and Rs. 20 million for display and medicine. Additionally, we would not be investing in any equipment for the next two years. The President mentioned that this initiative was a welfare project, which some doctors had also recommended due to the rising cost of medicines. He pointed out that even middle-class individuals were finding it difficult to afford the medicine.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired about the rent for the place.

The Secretariat responded that the rent was set at Rs. 25,000 per month.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar then asked about the benefit of the project questioning whether the medicines would be sold at 15% lower rates compared to the market.

The President clarified that the net profit margin on the medicines was 17%. However, they would gain 2% profit and 15% discount. The salaries of the medical store staff would be calculated from the profit. The rent and electricity charges would be covered by the Chamber.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar stated that the project would operate as a proper business model, addressing issues such as theft and other challenges. He emphasized that he did not recommend running such a project within the Chamber's domain.

In response, the President stated that the Chamber would not directly operate the project. Instead, a trust would be established to oversee and manage its operations. The Chamber would nominate members for the trust that would regularly update the Chamber on the project's progress. He emphasized that the Chamber's role would be limited to providing the space and some other facilitation.

Mr. Adnan Safdar emphasized that the type of funding should be clearly specified, whether it would be in the form of donations, zakat, or other categories, as discussed during the meeting.

The President emphasized that the board would discuss the terms under which members should contribute money if Zakat and Sadaqat were not collected. He clarified that the buyers' concerns should not be about whether the store was funded through Zakat or donations. The buyer's primary focus should be on purchasing medicine with their own money. The store's purpose was simply to provide a special discount on medicine, which was the original intention behind establishing this project.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar emphasized the importance of choosing a strategic location for the medical store. He pointed out that the initially proposed site is far from the market and recommended selecting a more suitable location, such as Commissioner Road near Allama Iqbal Hospital, where there was a thriving market and greater accessibility for customers.

In response, the President clarified that the location had been chosen with careful consideration. He explained that setting up the store near a cluster of hospitals and medical stores, like at Civil Hospital, could have led to potential objections, as it might negatively affect the business. Therefore, the decision was made to select this area. He further mentioned that the Committee had discussed and agreed upon the location after thorough deliberations.

Mr. Sohail Masood stated that the project was initiated for a noble cause and would soon be operational, bringing significant benefits to the people.

The President stated that if the project became operational, it would be recognized as a unique corporate social wing of this Chamber, gaining significant importance and global recognition. He also mentioned that the Sialkot Chamber had built its own ambulance for the emergency services of its members.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar inquired about the status of the ambulance.

The President responded that it had been handed over to the 1122 emergency service by Khawaja Masood Sahib during his tenure.

Mr. Salman Sheikh appreciated the project. He suggested that its impact could be significantly enhanced by including a generic-name initiative, which would help provide medicines at more affordable rates.

Mr. Adnan Safdar and Mr. Sohail Masood emphasized that patients/customers typically request medicines by the specific name recommended by their doctors. Therefore, it is advisable not to promote or recommend generic brands.

Mr. Salman Sheikh raised the issue regarding the parking of members' vehicles in the designated parking area. He proposed that, if feasible, the Office Bearers should park their vehicles inside the Chamber.

The President replied that such an arrangement would not be practical, as it could lead to potential damage to the flooring from the constant parking of vehicles in that area.

The Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

**Minutes approved by the President, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry.**