THE SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD ON JANUARY 25, 2025

01. A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held on January 25, 2025 at 11:00 a.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.

04. The following members attended the meeting:

• 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. Bilal Ahmed Khan	-do
• Mr. Haseeb Tahir	-do-
• Mr. Hassan Akbar	-do-
• Mr. Jawad Khalid	-do-
• Mr. Mehtab Maqsood	-do-
• Mr. Muhammad Abid	-do-
• Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad	-do-
• Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam	-do-
• Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman	-do-
• Mr. Sohail Masood	-do-
• Syeda Ayesha Wadood	-do-

05. **Leave of Absence**

• Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik	-Member-
• Ms. Kinza Ijaz	-do-
• Mr. Salman Sheikh	-do-
• Syed Ahtesham Mazhar	-do-

The President requested the Secretary General to request Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik to attend the next EC meeting.

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

• Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi	-do-
• Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Asad	-do-

07. **Special Invitees**

- Malik Naseer Ahmed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Accounts
- Mr. Imran Ali Rana, Chairman Departmental Committee on Income Tax/FTR
- Mian Asif Ali, Chairman Departmental Committee of Sports Activities.

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

- Mother of Mr. Javed Iqbal M/s. Moltex Sporting Goods.
- Mr. Ali Uz Zaman Brother of Mr. Usman Uz Zaman of M/s. Helicon Ent.
- Sister of Mr. Ijaz Khokhar of M/s. Ashraf Industries.
- Sh. Sheraz Akhtar Sandal of M/s. Laurels Co. (Pvt) Ltd.

<table>
<tr><td>09. Point discussed.</td><td>Approval of minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on January 01, 2025.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"><u>Discussion:</u>

Mr. Murad Arshad inquired about the status of the Banking Committee's meeting with the State Bank of Pakistan to discuss the issues raised in the last Executive Committee (EC) meeting.

Mr. Omair Nisar responded that a letter had been written regarding the issues. It was decided to organize a seminar next month to address the challenges faced by members concerning Foreign Exchange.

The President suggested to hold the seminar in mid of February.

Mr. Murad Arshad suggested holding a meeting with the State Bank instead of a seminar.

In response, Mr. Omair Nisar explained that the Chief Manager of the State Bank was not a specialist in Foreign Exchange matters. Therefore, a seminar had been planned to invite Foreign Exchange specialists from the State Bank, Karachi to discuss the issues and their possible resolutions. He further added that, if necessary, the matter could be referred to higher authorities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participants</td><td>The President, Mr. Murad Arshad and Mr. Omair Nisar.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Approval</td><td>Approved.</td></tr>
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<tr><td>10. Point discussed.</td><td>Approval of Statement of Accounts for the month of December 2024 and the minutes of meeting of Departmental Committee on Accounts and Finance held on January 22, 2025.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"><u>Discussion:</u>

Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed stated that a Committee Meeting was held on January 22, 2025, to review the monthly accounts and examine the vouchers. He mentioned that the vouchers were assessed in accordance with the SOPs established by the management and were found to be satisfactory. Additionally, he noted that a certain amount remains in the Fairs & Exhibitions Head, which needed to be resolved, either to refund to members or to adjust accordingly.

The President informed that the Accounts Officer had been working alone due to resignation of some employees. However, new staff had now been hired, and he expressed his hope that all tasks would be carried out strictly in accordance with the established SOPs and procedures.

Mr. Sohail Masood stated that an amount of Rs. 1,210,000/- was received from the members for the delegation to Canada a long time ago. However, as the delegation could not proceed and had now been abandoned, hence he requested that the amount should be returned to the members.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi briefed the house about the SCCI delegations to Canada and Korea, which could not be executed due to unavoidable circumstances had been discussed in the Departmental Committee on Fairs &</td></tr>
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Exhibitions The Committee had recommended that the amount should be refunded to each applicant via a cross cheque. Regarding the Korea delegation, the house recommended asking the delegates if they still wished to participate then the delegation should proceed with additional delegates; otherwise, the delegation should be been called off, and the fee be refunded. He said that another delegation to Brazil was also pending which would be discussed in next Committee Meeting to take any decision.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Mr. Sohail Masood and Malik Naseer Ahmed.
Approval	Approved.

11. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Post Office/Telecommunication held on January 02, 2025.
<u>Discussion:</u> The President informed the members that a request had been made to the Post Office to issue an honorary ticket in recognition of the Women Chamber's outstanding performance. The Post Office confirmed that the ticket would be issued by February. The President instructed Mr. Abdul Rauf, Secretary of the Committee, to keep him updated on the matter. If necessary, he should draft a follow-up letter to the Director General of Pakistan Post. During the discussion It was informed that the Pakistan Post Office had issued the honorary ticket in honor of the Women's Chamber Sialkot, an achievement for Women Chamber. He mentioned that the idea for the honorary ticket was initially suggested by him and later pursued by Mr. Ahmed Imtiaz Khan, Chairman of the Departmental Committee, with the relevant authorities. Mr. Ahmed's efforts led to the successful approval and issuance of the ticket. The house congratulated him on this accomplishment. The President informed the members that the price of the ticket was set at Rs. 50, and Executive Member could purchase it voluntarily. He also highlighted that the total cost of printing and related expenses was approximately Rs. 800,000, of which the Sialkot Chamber was responsible for Rs. 200,000. He invited members to contribute voluntarily and stated that, if needed, the Executive Committee (EC) could approve the release of Rs. 200,000 from the Chamber's funds. The house unanimously approved a contribution of Rs. 10,000 from each EC Member to collectively raise the required amount of Rs. 200,000.	
Participants	The President.
Approval	Approved.

12. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Industrial Safety & Risk Management held on January 03, 2025.
Approval	Approved.

13. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Military Uniform & Badges held on January 08, 2025.
<u>Discussion</u> Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman mentioned that there were eight global exhibitions related to military uniform badges sector. He highlighted that the badges industry had become as important as other industries, although the export rate	

currently stands at just 0.2%. He recommended requesting TDAP to include these exhibitions in their annual exhibitions calendar. Additionally, he shared his experience attending an IWA exhibition organized by TDAP that focused on the Badges Industry.

Mr. Ammar Ahmed Khan clarified that the request couldn't be made to TDAP (Trade Development Authority of Pakistan) because the exhibition was organized by DEPO (Defence Export Promotion Organization), not TDAP.

Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman raised concerns about the high charges imposed by DEPO for a stall at IDEX. He mentioned paying $6,500 for a space that was less than two feet by two feet in size, which he found unreasonable. He suggested that TDAP should intervene in such matters.

The President stated that, as he understood, the IDEX exhibition did not fall under the purview of TDAP, and DEPO did not subsidize the stall. He questioned that if DEPO was not providing a subsidy, what difference did it make whether the stall was set up under DEPO or privately?

In response, Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman suggested that DEPO could have arranged the pavilion for exhibitors and recommended reaching out to Brigadier Usman, who managed the exhibition, for assistance in addressing the issues, especially requested him to charge reasonable fee for the exhibition.

The President stated that at the request of Brig. Usman, the Sialkot Chamber extended significant cooperation in the Exhibition held at Karachi, which he admired. He further mentioned that he would discuss the matter with Brig. Usman and request him to arrange a pavilion in this particular exhibition. He also asked Sheikh Atiq whether other members were also interested to participate in the said exhibition.

Sheikh Atiq Ur Rehman and Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan replied that more than 10 members, who were present in the Committee meeting, were interested to participate and some of them attended the exhibition in past.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi asked if there was any particular exhibition in which they desired to participate.

Sheikh Atiq Ur Rehman replied that there were eight exhibitions.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi inquired whether DEPO was organizing the eight exhibitions. In response, Sheikh Atiq ur Rahman confirmed that DEPO was indeed organizing exhibitions. Mr. Lodhi further stated that they would verify if the exhibitions were being funded through EDF. If so, they would request DEPO to provide a subsidy for the members.

The President instructed Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman to convene a committee meeting to select two exhibitions deemed the best. Following this, a declaration must be obtained from the members expressing their intent to participate in these exhibitions. The declaration would establish their commitment to exhibiting as approved. Once this is completed, the Chamber would request the DEPO and the Ministry of Commerce to arrange these exhibitions for members at subsidized rates.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi endorsed the opinion of the President and encouraged members to participate in TDAP's single country exhibition, where business representatives from various sectors were participating.

The President expressed that attending a single-country exhibition would not be practical. If purchases were made only from the official site in that country, it would result in just one customer for the participation. He emphasized that regional exhibitions, such as those held in Europe, USA and South America would be more suitable for their needs.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman, Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan and Mr. Ammar Ahmed Khan.
Approval	Approved.

14. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Income Tax/ FTR held on January 16, 2025

<u>Discussion:</u>

The President appreciated Rana Imran Ali for his outstanding performance as Chairman of the Committee. He noted that this was Mr. Imran's first nomination to serve in this role within the Sialkot Chamber, and he had truly won the hearts of the members. The President further stated that members had expressed their appreciation for Mr. Rana Imran's efforts both through direct conversations and telephone calls. He also acknowledged Mr. Imran's valuable personal connections, which he utilized to facilitate members. Additionally, Mr. Imran successfully organized and planned several meetings, ensuring benefits for the business community and the Chamber.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana, Chairman of the Departmental Committee on FBR, informed that a committee meeting was held to discuss suggestions for the revival of the Final / Fixed Tax Regime (FTR) and proposals for the Federal Budget 2025-26, as the budget preparation process by the FBR had commenced. He provided an update on the efforts made by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding the revival of the FTR for exporters. Additionally, he stated that a meeting was scheduled with Lt. General Sarfraz Ahmad, National Coordinator of the Pakistan Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), on January 25, 2025, to discuss the matter. However, the meeting was postponed and had been rescheduled for a date after February 10, 2025. Mr. Imran Ali Rana stated that the minutes included various proposals from members regarding the FTR. He mentioned that he had discussed the matter with Dr. Hamid Latif, the Member Policy FTR, who indicated that if the government failed to restore the FTR, then alternative actions, such as audits or other measures, would be considered. However, these points were not addressed in the discussions on FTR. Mr. Rana expressed concern that institutions were passing the responsibility to each other, with no one willing to take the initiative to resolve the issue. He further noted that, unfortunately, both Karachi and Faisalabad Chambers were against restoration of the FTR.

The President highlighted those concerns being raised repeatedly about some Chambers opposed to the restoration of the FTR (Federal Tax Refund), and that the Chairman of the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) had also mentioned this issue. He noted that the first information came from a meeting with the Chairman of FBR, where it was revealed that the business community had previously abolished the FTR, with support from a certain political regime. The question was raised as to why Sialkot Chamber wanted to restore it, to which they provided a detailed briefing in favor of restoration of FTR. The President then requested Mr. Imran Ali Rana to bring the Executive Body into the discussion and clarify why Chambers like Karachi or others were advocating for abolition of the FTR. He sought to understand the logic behind this position and why they were willing to compromise the interests of exporters.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana stated that in Karachi, multinational companies had implemented all accounting procedures and separately hire chartered companies for their financial matters. In contrast, the entire industry in Sialkot operated under the SME category, even for companies registered as private limited entities, as their directors primarily belong to the same families. Furthermore, these companies neither declare losses nor carry significant bank borrowings that would reflect in their balance sheets.

Mr. Imran stated that businesses in Sialkot did not engage in transactions worth billions of dollars or rupees. In contrast, businesses in Karachi often declared losses in their balance sheets. He explained that if a fixed tax rate of 2% were applied under the Final Tax Regime (FTR) scheme, it would effectively amount to a tax rate of 52-60% of their actual profit. Therefore, their concern was why they should be subjected to a fixed tax. He further added that they were not even in favour of a 1% tax under the FTR scheme. He pointed out that businesses in Karachi generated their white money through tax adjustments, whereas the issue for Sialkot businesses was different. In Sialkot, white money was necessary for purchasing cars, factories, houses, or making other investments. As exporters, they believed that if the tax rate was set at 2% and they declared 10% of receipt of their income, they could remain within a safe financial zone. He added that he had asked the Member Policy that how SMEs could flourish under this scheme. He mentioned that several proposals emerged from discussions with FBR officials, including making the scheme optional rather than compulsory, introducing a simplified income tax return for exporters, establishing a benchmark for business account submissions, and granting audit exemptions in exchange for a 1.5% tax deduction as the final discharge of exporters' tax liability.

The President mentioned that a meeting with the FBR Chairman had been requested. He asked the executive committee to provide their initial thoughts on the matter and whether they had any suggestions for a better approach.

Mr. Murad Arshad stated that Sialkot's industry primarily consisted of cottage industries and SMEs, which were unable to provide a money trail. Therefore, it could be proposed to the government that export-oriented companies be brought under the Final Tax Regime (FTR), while traders and other businesses should fall under the Normal Tax Regime (NTR). He further emphasized that vendors supplying goods to these businesses could not be documented by them, as it was the responsibility of the government or relevant departments to bring them into the tax network.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana stated that FTR and NTR pertained to export-oriented businesses and were not applicable to other businesses.

The President stated that in meetings with the FBR Chairman, Commerce Minister, and Finance Minister, we had emphasized that if their departments could not effectively implement the registered economy or tax collection system, exporters should not be made to bear the consequences. In this regard, we suggested that a structured five-year plan be established to gradually bring unregistered businesses into the tax system as registered entities. Secondly, regarding the audit of books of accounts related to purchases, it was noted that the Sialkot Chamber had 24,000 members, while govt. departments currently lacked the necessary staff to effectively audit all their records. Given this limitation, there was a risk that matters could be resolved through unofficial means, which was undesirable. Therefore, we suggested that exporters should continue operating under the Final Tax Regime (FTR) for the time being until FBR etc. adapted its system to efficiently manage the auditing process.

The President stated that if the House approved, correspondence be initiated

with all Chambers, including the Federation and relevant trade bodies, through the Sialkot Chamber, to seek their support for the restoration of the FTR. Letters should be sent requesting their endorsement of our stance on this matter. In the second phase, a delegation from the Sialkot Chamber would visit these organizations in person to further strengthen the effort.

The house unanimously approved the proposal of the President.

Syeda Ayesha Wadood suggested that the Sialkot Chamber should engage with institutions or individuals who were impacted by changes in such tax policies.

Th President responded that we held meetings with the Finance Minister, Commerce Minister, FBR Chairman, and Regional FBR Officers. We also invited them to the Sialkot Chamber, where thoroughly discussed all the issues. However, they cited economic challenges and IMF-related constraints in relation to tax matters. He added that another reason was that the other Chambers did not support the Sialkot Chamber in its efforts to restore the FTR. The President informed that matter was also highlighted through Print Media.

Mr. Hassan Akbar appreciated the Chairman Committee on his working. He said that the businesses of people from other cities were not 100 percent export oriented, due to which they did not have much stake and their Chambers did not support the Sialkot Chamber in the revival of FTR. He said that even the one percent tax deducted in the FTR was high for them because they had other big business houses in which they used to calculate and settle their tax matters, as the Chairman had explained. Secondly, Mr. Hassan Akbar expressed concern about the lack of awareness among SMEs in Sialkot regarding the burden imposed by the government. He emphasized the potential problems if audit notices were received after June 30, suggesting that the issue needed urgent resolution. Mr. Akbar proposed that if the matter was not resolved by March 30, the Committee should organize awareness seminars in the Chamber to inform SMEs about the consequences of abolishing the FTR and how to handle the issues with department. He said that the audit of bureaucracy should be conducted in the same manner as it was for businessmen and politicians.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana stated that while preparing the budget, the government, like various Chambers, also sought budget proposals from the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry. However, unfortunately, the proposals submitted were not implemented or included in the final budget. In this regard, it was discussed in the Committee meeting that the Sialkot Chamber should establish a Sub-Committee to raise funds similar to those in Chambers such as Lahore, Faisalabad, and Karachi, to formulate budget proposals. This Committee would actively lobby for the inclusion of their recommendations in the annual budget, with technical support from the working team.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana said that the Committee also discussed issues related to refunds. He stated that the First In, First Out (FIFO) method implemented at the RTO level was creating many problems. He further mentioned that, based on the Committee's recommendation, a meeting had been planned with the Chief Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Regional Tax Office, Sialkot, to seek a resolution on the matter. Mr. Imran added that the meeting had been scheduled on Monday at 12:30 p.m.

Mr. Sohail Masood shared the past experience of Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad Chambers regarding implementation of Sales Tax.

The President stated that the Sialkot Chamber was making every effort to restore the FTR issue on its part. However, he emphasized that members also had a responsibility to properly document their transactions, as no business could operate without maintaining books of accounts. He further noted that the situation was becoming increasingly challenging over time. If businesses failed to document its activities, it would not only be problematic from the FBR's perspective but also in light of the prevailing circumstances. He urged members to manage their businesses professionally, regardless of whether they operate as sole proprietors. **The President stated that this matter would remain pending until March, after which further action would be taken based on the Government's decision on the FTR.** He added that even if the FTR was restored, he would still encourage members to maintain their business accounts for their betterment and profitability.

The President stated that the Secretary General had mentioned that the "Uraan Pakistan" project was launched by Ahsan Iqbal for exporters. He inquired about the incentives provided to exporters under this initiative and emphasized the need to obtain detailed information.

The President directed that a letter should be written to get the meeting time and acquire comprehensive details of "Uraan Project", particularly regarding the project's future prospects, taxation implications, and its benefit to exports.

Mr. Imran Ali Rana stated that under the 'Uraan Pakistan' project, the government had set specific export targets for SMEs and new exporters. To support this initiative, he suggested that the government might be requested to exempt exporters from disclosing their financial sources when establishing new factories.

After detailed discussion, the President instructed Mr. Jamshed Murtaza Badar, Deputy Secretary to do the following:-

- **Write a letter to Prime Minister of Pakistan with Copy to Federal Minister for Finance, Federal Minister for Planning Development & Reforms, Federal Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen. Sarfraz Ahmed, Chairman FBR, Member IR Operation FBR, Member IR Policy FBR IR for meeting with FBR Officials to strategize the revival of the final/fix tax regime.**

- **A letter addressed to President FPCCI Copy to S.M. Tanveer, Mr. Anwaar Ul Haq Kakar requesting therein for support in revival of the final/fixed tax regime for exporter.**

- **Write a letter to all Chambers of Commerce in Pakistan for Urgent need for lobbying & support for the Final Tax Regime.**

The Secretary General suggested that APTMA should also be taken on board in this regard.

Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan suggested that the option of protest could also be considered.

In response, the President stated that this matter had been discussed in several meetings. However, some members were of the opinion that the issue should first be resolved through discussion. If that approach did not yield results, then the option of protest could be considered after March. Therefore, the matter remained pending until March.

The members also discussed the 5% withholding sales tax. In response, the President stated that there was no better solution than the terms and conditions

under which our former President had signed the agreement with the FBR to resolve the issue. He added that the members also acknowledged the solution and agreed that the payment was their responsibility.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Murad Arshad, Mr. Hassan Akbar, Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan, Mr. Sohail Masood and Mr. Imran Ali Rana
Approval	Approved.

15. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Sports Activities held on January 21, 2025
Discussion Mr. Asif Ali, Chairman Departmental Committee on Sports Activities informed that following events were planned. • A Cricket Match between Sialkot Chamber and University of Sialkot Cricket Teams would be played on February 09, 2025 at Garrison Cricket Ground. University of Sialkot would host the event. • A Cricket Match between Sialkot Chamber and Jhelum Chamber of Commerce Cricket Teams would be played on February 22, 2025 at Jhelum. Jhelum Chamber of Commerce would host the event. • The Sialkot Chamber would organize Hockey Event at School Level and One day Tape Ball Cricket Tournament of the Trade Bodies of Sialkot in Ramzan. Mr. Asif Ali highlighted the low attendance of Executive Members at sports events. He urged them to participate, emphasizing that their presence enhanced the overall appeal of the program. The President endorsed Mr. Asif Ali's viewpoint and remarked that EC Members should attend the events. He emphasized that they should allocate time for the Sports events. Mr. Hassan Akbar suggested scheduling the event in the evening. The President appreciated the performance of Mr. Asif Ali in his role as Chairman of the Committee.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Asif Ali and Mr. Hassan Akbar.
Approval	Approved.

16. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with Ms. Saira Agha, Collector of Customs Sialkot, held on December 20, 2024.
Approval	Approved.

17. Point discussed.	Approval of the minutes of meeting regarding Sialkot Export Processing Zone held on December 24, 2024.
<u>Discussion:</u> The President requested Mr. Omair Nisar to brief the house on the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) Project. Mr. Umair Nisar explained that the EPZ project was managed by two departments: the Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) and the Export	

Processing Zones Authority (EPZA). While EPZA oversaw legal matters, PSIC was responsible for land-related affairs. Initially, the project was declared as Small Industrial-1 and Small Industrial-2. However, upon the request of the Sialkot business community, it was later approved as an EPZ.

The project was developed under a rollover scheme, where members contributed funds to purchase land, making the ownership technically belonging to the plot holders. However, over time, the Federal Government gradually reduced incentives for the project, which led to a decline in members' interest in setting up factories within the zone. Concurrently, the Punjab Government raised objections regarding factory construction, prompting PSIC to repeatedly cancel plots. The Sialkot Chamber intervened several times, securing extensions for the project. At one point, under a new policy, PSIC imposed a charge of Rs. 700,000 per kanal for plot retention. However, after further intervention by the Sialkot Chamber, the notices were stopped. Additionally, government's decisions made it difficult for members to establish factories. A significant development occurred in 2023, during the tenure of Malik Abdul Ghafoor. One major breakthrough was the approval from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) allowing the purchase of construction materials from the local tariff area for use in the EPZ. Previously, this was not permitted as easily, but the approval extended this allowance until 2028. Given this progress, we had requested the Government of Punjab to align with this policy by restoring the cancelled plots at least until 2028. This would ensure that both the federal and provincial governments were on the same page, allowing stakeholders to construct factories without incurring penalties or additional charges.

Mr. Omair Nisar stated that multiple meetings were held with Mr. Shafay Hussain, Provincial Minister for Industries, regarding the PSIC notices. The sitting President was also in contact with Mr. Shafay Hussain on the matter. The last meeting of the Chamber's delegation took place in September. However, despite assurances from the concerned department, the minutes of the PSIC Board meeting received indicated an increase in charges from Rs. 700,000 to Rs. 1,000,000 per kanal. Mr. Omair Nisar stated that the Sialkot Chamber had categorically denied to accept the charges mentioned in the minutes of the meeting. In this regard, a letter signed by the President was sent to Mr. Shafay Hussain, requesting therein revisiting the decision taken by the PSIC Board in its 129th meeting held on December 24, 2024. Mr. Umair Nisar stated that PSIC requested the Sialkot Chamber President to jointly announce the decisions mentioned in the minutes; however, the Sialkot Chamber declined to comply with this request.

The President further informed that he had discussed the matter with Mr. Shafay Hussain, the Minister of Industries Punjab, a day before the meeting, addressing the following four key points and seeking approval, which was agreed upon:

- A request was made for the construction of a boundary wall, and the Department confirmed that work would commence by the end of January 2025, with completion expected by March. However, this commitment was not recorded in the meeting minutes.
- It was requested that these charges be withdrawn, but the Department declined and insisted on imposed them. The Department fixed a 6% charge.
- The President emphasized that plot cancellations were occurring due to incomplete matters on the part of the government and PSIC. He argued that industrialization and colonization in the EPZ could not proceed until these issues were resolved. While the Department initially agreed in principle to waive these charges, they later altered their stance. Instead,

they proposed imposing charges based on a percentage of the current market price (DC rate), amounting to approximately Rs. 10 lakh per kanal.
- It was suggested that allottees be facilitated through an exit policy similar to the one established in the Tannery Zone Project, which the Minister agreed to. However, this point was also omitted from the meeting minutes.

The President stated that in this entire matter, PSIC had been exerting undue influence. It had come to his knowledge that PSIC had never facilitated the Sialkot Chamber or played a constructive role. Instead, PSIC consistently used the sitting minister to impose decisions on the Chamber without prior consultation, which was unacceptable and disrupted the business community. Consequently, we had completely rejected the minutes of the meeting held by Mr. Shafay Hussain, Provincial Minister for Industries, on December 24, and had formally communicated our concerns to him in writing. The President stated that they would first review the reply received from PSIC regarding the Chamber's letter. Following this, a meeting would be held with the Minister of Industries, Punjab, and the matter would also be taken up with the Chief Minister of Punjab.

Mr. Adnan Safdar suggested that the role of PSIC be withdrawn from this project.

The President replied that PSIC had initiated this project, so their role could not be withdrawn from this project.

Participants	The President, Mr. Adnan Safdar and Mr. Omair Nisar.
Approval	Approved.

18. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with NLC & DP World held on January 10, 2025.
Approval	Approved.

19. Point discussed.	Approval of report of seminar on Innovation-Led Productivity Program/Initiatives by NPO and Punjab Job Center by PITB held on January 21, 2025.
Approval	Approved.

20. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Fairs & Exhibitions & Delegations, held on January 22, 2025.

Discussion:

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodi stated that the Committee had discussed the upcoming exhibitions and the Jeddah exhibition. He highlighted the following:-

- Regarding the Jeddah exhibition, he had provided a briefing but noted that the issue of visa grants for exhibitors from the Embassy remained unresolved.
- Fee for the Canadian delegation, which was not executed, was being refunded following the Committee’s approval.
- Regarding the Korea delegation, the house recommended consulting the delegates to confirm their continued interest. If they still wished to participate, the delegation should proceed with additional members. Otherwise, it should be called off, and the fee be refunded.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi requested Mr. Ammar Khan to brief the house on the Brazil delegation, as it had been pending for a long time and was not executed. He stated that the Executive Committee's decision on this delegation would be implemented accordingly.

Mr. Ammar Khan informed the house that a delegation to Brazil was originally planned for May 2024. Fifteen members were selected for this delegation, and after compiling the list, it was sent to the Commercial Section to issue a Note Verbal to proceed further. However, a response was received from the Commercial Section stating that the note verbal would be issued from the Ambassador's Office. This note was subsequently sent, but it was also indicated that it would ultimately be issued from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The matter of the Brazil delegation remained pending in both the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a year. Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested final comments from the TDAP Karachi and Sialkot offices regarding this delegation. TDAP Karachi responded that the delegation was not part of their current business plan. Furthermore, they advised that if the Sialkot Chamber intended to send the delegation, they would need to complete the necessary documentation and follow the standard procedure once again.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi stated that the delegation had been pending for over a year. He suggested that if the house approved, the fee collected for this delegation should be refunded to the members.

Mr. Sohail Masood proposed that a meeting be convened with the members, and final decision should be made after considering their opinions.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi highlighted an issue with the online application for the Canton Fair (January 27, 2025), where only one phase was available for selection. He requested that a notice be circulated to interested members of Sialkot, advising them to specify their preferred phase for participation in the137th Canton Fair, China, by mentioning it in the comments section of the online form or cover letter. This would help avoid any confusion during the shortlisting/selection process by TDAP. He further stated that members who applied directly for participation in exhibitions through TDAP should also submit a copy of their documents to the Sialkot Chamber for record-keeping and any necessary follow-up actions, if required.

Mr. Jawad Khalid inquired whether TDAP had shared any list of subsidized fairs or a list of new fairs.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi stated that TDAP had provided them with a list of its annual subsidized and other fairs. However, he mentioned that the list was quite extensive and, therefore, was not circulated. He further added that any member could request the list if needed. He further said that, in addition, the Committee had prepared a list regarding the Sialkot-specific exhibition and had been recommending it to TDAP, in which the surgical, Badges and beauty industries have provided their input to include these exhibitions in TDAP's annual exhibition calendar for next year.

Sheikh Shahid Inam stated that a recent meeting with the Saudi Ambassador was held at the Sialkot Chamber, but he was not invited. He expressed his strong desire to attend the meeting, particularly because an exhibition was being held in Saudi Arabia, with six Executive Members participating. He further emphasized that Executive Members should be invited to as many meetings as possible to ensure their active participation.

The President replied positively.

Mr. Hassan Akbar stated that a delegation visited the U.S. last year. He mentioned that the members inquired about their refunds, as the expected refund date was July 2024. Mr. Ammar Khan confirmed that TDAP Sialkot had received the approved funds and expressed hope that the cheque would be issued shortly. In response, Mr. Waseem requested Mr. Ammar to draft a follow-up letter to TDAP regarding this matter. Additionally, the President requested that the matter of the Australia and UK delegation refunds be included in the letter.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Mr. Hassan Akbar, Mr. Sheikh Shahid Inam, Mr. Jawad Khalid, Mr. Sohail Masod and Mr. Ammar Khan.
Approval	Approved.

21. Point discussed.	Minutes of meeting of Departmental Committee on Human Resource held on January 22, 2025.
Approval	Approved.

22. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Membership/Bye-Laws held on January 17, 2025.
Approval	Approved.

Any Other Point:

23. Mr. Jawad Khalid inquired about the facts concerning the Sialkot Tannery Zone, as some members were spreading negative propaganda in a WhatsApp group. They were alleging that the Sialkot Chamber was not addressing their concerns regarding the allotment of plots in the Tannery Zone and that the Chamber had allocated plots based on favoritism.

The President stated that after holding meetings with the Commissioner of Gujranwala and the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Sialkot, a formula was agreed upon for plot allocation in the Tannery Zone. Following their advice, applications were invited, with an initial one-week deadline set by the authorities. However, to ensure maximum participation, applications were kept open for a month, during which interested parties were encouraged to apply. Approximately 109 applications were received and submitted to the DC of Sialkot as per the Commissioner's directives. In response, the DC assigned an officer from the Environment Department to verify whether the applicants' tanneries were owned or rented. Under the formula established by the Commissioner:

- Applicants with owned tanneries would be placed in Phase One.
- Those with rented tanneries would be placed in Phase Two.
- New tannery setups would be accommodated in Phase Three, provided plots were available.

The DC was currently overseeing this process, but the Environment Department had yet to submit its report. To expedite the matter, representatives from the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and the Tannery Zone would jointly conduct an inquiry, verifying the list through documented evidence, including photos and videos. After cross-verifying of the findings, the final plot allocation would be decided. The President further informed that SCCI had already verified 76 tanneries, with the verification of the remaining 15 to 18 tanneries expected to be completed by Monday. Following this, the Chairman of the Tannery Zone had been requested to submit the report to the DC, obtain the Environment Department's report, and finalize the allocation process accordingly. The President further informed that under the exit policy, requests had been received from members to surrender plots totaling 150 kanals. Meanwhile, new requests had been received for plots covering a total area of 250 kanals. He also informed that Tannery Zone Administration had issued cancellation notices to 140 allottees of Tannery Zone due to their failure to complete the boundary wall and construction requirements.

24. The President mentioned that Mr. Imran Khan Baba, the GOC of the 15th Division, has approached the Chamber multiple times since December 15th 2024 requesting a donation of Rs. 2 million. The GOC called a meeting and was actively following up on this matter. The proposed funds would be used to install a decorative grill along the boundary wall of Kashmir Park, with each section featuring backlit images of notable figures from Sialkot. This included renowned individuals like Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, sports legends, and iconic industrial products, such as cricket gear and footballs. Similar to installations seen at the Civil Lines or military checkpoints, this initiative aimed to honor Sialkot's contributions. He requested the Executive Committee Member to volunteer the amount in this regard.

Mr. Hassan Akbar, Mr. Mehtab Maqsood, Mr. Murad Arshad and Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan announced Rs. 200,000/- each.

25. The President announced that quotations had been invited for printing the Chamber's bulletin, and Hamdard Art Pakistan submitted the lowest quotation, requiring approval from the house. He further stated that the bulletin would consist of 32 pages, with a total of 5,000 copies to be printed. Additionally, he mentioned that a meeting would be held to explore the possibility of electronic printing, in accordance with the rules, to avoid unnecessary printing expenses.

The house unanimously approved the quotation of M/s. Hamdard Art Pakistan of Printing of Bulletin.

Mr. Murad Arshad stated that he had not received the Chamber magazine for several years. In response, the Resident assured him that every effort would be made to ensure its proper delivery.

26. Mr. Sohail Masood inquired about the update of meeting held with Rana Tanveer Hussain regarding Sialkot Business & Commerce Center.

The President stated that Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Industries principally agreed with our position and carefully listened to our concerns. Members of SMEDA were also present during the discussion. SMEDA claimed that the SBCC land did not belong to the Sialkot Chamber, whereas the Chamber maintained that this land was granted to them by the Chief Minister and Khawaja Muhammad Safdar Sahib for the specific purpose of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce. We have an official document, Fard, which details the land's ownership. During the discussion, we challenged SMEDA's claim regarding the land ownership. Dr. Noman Idrees Butt Sahib accompanied me and presented the case convincingly, reinforcing our stance with strong arguments. His in-depth understanding of the matter was so compelling that Rana Tanveer Hussain acknowledged our position. Consequently, Rana Tanveer Hussain decided that if the Sialkot Chamber's claim was proven correct through the official document, he would arrange a meeting with the Senior Member of the Board of Revenue (SMBR) in Lahore. He advised us to present our documents to SMBR for verification, and if validated, the ownership of the building would be handed over to the Sialkot Chamber.

On the other hand, Rana Tanveer Hussain further stated that he assumed, even if the Chamber's position was not correct, or if SMEDA's claim was correct or partially wrong, the Sialkot Chamber would still benefit. According to the details outlined in PC-1, a company would be established under Section 42, with a majority of its members from the Sialkot Chamber, including its Chairman. The membership structure would be in a 6:4 ratio—Six members from the Sialkot Chamber and four from SMEDA. Following this, a meeting was arranged with SMBR in Lahore. Dr. Noman Sahib accompanied me, and we presented the relevant documents to SMBR's staff for verification and endorsement. They assured us that if the documents were found accurate, they would officially communicate their findings to the Minister and the Sialkot Chamber. Feedback from SMBR was awaited, and hopefully, we would proceed with implementation based on their report.

27. Mr. Murad Arshad inquired about set up of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Desk at Business Facilitation Center.

The President stated that during the annual function of BFC, he had requested Khawaja Muhammad Asif to establish an attestation desk of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at BFC. In response, the Deputy Commissioner and representatives of the Punjab Board of Investment and Technology, present at the event, informed him that the frequency of attestation requests in the area was low, making it unsuitable to set up a dedicated desk. The President further mentioned that he had conveyed to Hajj Muhammad Asif Sahib that this matter should be discussed further, as their assessment indicated that approximately 18 to 20 individuals required attestation services daily. The President stated that the following day, he met Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, at the residence of Khawaja Muhammad Asif. During this meeting, he requested the Interior Minister to establish a dedicated counter at the Business Facilitation Center. The Interior Minister agreed to the request, and subsequently, the Sialkot Chamber also sent a formal letter as a reminder.

The President also informed that Khawaja Muhammad Asif informed the Interior Minister that he had been told that the frequency at this location was very low, which was why the MOFA counter could not be established. In response, the Interior Minister said that they would establish the LDA counter alongside it.

Mr. Murad Arshad informed that a MOFA counter had been set up in Gujrat.

The President stated that he had conveyed to the Minister of Interior that if a MOFA counter could be established in Gujrat, then a similar facility should also be set up in Sialkot. He emphasized that Gujrat serves areas such as Mandi Bahauddin, Kharian, and Jhelum, where a significant number of residents were Overseas Pakistanis who frequently require document attestations.

Mr. Hassan Akbar suggested that efforts should be made to strongly advocate for the establishment of a MOFA counter in Sialkot.

The President further proposed that if setting up a MOFA counter at BFC Sialkot was not feasible, arrangements could be made to facilitate Sialkot Chamber members at the Gujrat counter.

28. The President stated that after February 8, he would hold a meeting with the Women's Chamber regarding the issuance of honorary tickets in their honor and would celebrate the occasion appropriately. Additionally, he emphasized that a letter should be signed and sent to the Women's Chamber on this matter. Furthermore, the President directed that this achievement should also be shared in the WhatsApp group.

29. The President said that he was pleased to announce that, for the first time, the Sialkot Chamber was publishing an official diary for the year 2025, accompanied by a notebook. He said that if any member of the Executive Body, or anyone they knew, was interested to publish their advertisement, it could still be accommodated.

The advertisement rates for the diary were as Inner page: PKR 50,000 Backside page: PKR 100,000 and Opening pages: PKR 150,000

The primary objective behind printing this diary was to establish a long-lasting presence of Sialkot Chamber, a project that had not been undertaken before. The diary would be printed without utilizing the Chamber's funds. He said that an amount of over PKR 5 million had been collected through sponsorships from members. The total cost of printing of 1,000 diaries and 1,000 notebooks was estimated at PKR 2.5 to 2.6 million. He would provide further details on the utilization of the remaining funds. However, the key objective was to distribute these diaries as official gifts to Embassies and Commercial counsellors in Pakistan. This would ensure that Sialkot remains visible on their desks throughout the year, reinforcing its significance. Additionally, the diaries would be sent to Pakistani Ambassadors and Commercial Counsellors worldwide, ensuring that Sialkot's presence was recognized daily at the international level. This project was a self-sustaining initiative that would not only promote Sialkot but also would strengthen its identity among key stakeholders worldwide.

The President announced that the third initiative under consideration was the creation of an advertisement book using the remaining amount of approximately Rs. 2 million. This 500-page publication would feature four-color advertisements from Sialkot exporters. Priority would be given to financial contributors, who would not be charged again, while non-paying members would be considered later, with efforts made to accommodate them. He further proposed that those who did not advertise in the diaries and notebooks should be charged Rs. 50,000 per full-page advertisement and Rs. 25,000 per half-page advertisement.

The house unanimously agreed to proceed with the advertisement book and the proposed charges as suggested by the President.

The President stated that if the number of advertisements increased significantly, they would be categorized sector-wise, such as Sports, Surgical, Beauty, Badges, and Leather.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi supported this idea, suggesting that the categorization should be sector-wise.

30. Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry inquired about the future course of action regarding the offices currently operating in the SBCC Building if the Sialkot Chamber was to gain control of it.

In response, the President stated that the decision would be made by the relevant Board or Committee.

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

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