

THE SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee **Held on November 30, 2024**

01. A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held on November 30, 2024 at 12:00 Noon 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:

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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. Bilal Ahmed Khan | -do- |
| • Mr. Haseeb Tahir | -do- |
| • Mr. Hassan Akbar | -do- |
| • Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi | -do- |
| • Mr. Mehtab Maqsood | -do- |
| • Mr. Muhammad Abid | -do- |
| • Mr. Salman Sheikh | -do- |
| • Mr. Sohail Masood | -do- |
| • Syed Ahtesham Mazhar | -do- |

05. Leave of Absence

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| • Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik | -Member- |
| • Mr. Jawad Khalid | -do- |
| • Ms. Kinza Ijaz | -do- |
| • Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad | -do- |
| • Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam | -do- |
| • Syeda Ayesha Wadood | -do- |
| • Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman | -do- |

06. Members who could not attend the meeting

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| • Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Asad | -do- |
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07. Special Invitees

- Mrs. Gulzaib Waqas Awan, Chairperson of Departmental Committee on WRC
- Malik Naseer Ahmed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Accounts
- Mr. Fizan Akbar, Chairman Departmental Committee on SME
- Mr. Muhammad Ejaz Ghauree, Chairman Departmental Committee on Garrison Head Quarter
- Mr. Haji Tariq, Chairman Departmental Committee on Dyrport Shipping
- Mr. Fizan Akbar, Chairman Departmental Committee on SME

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

- Wife of Chaudhary Zulfiqa A. Hayat
- Ch. Rehmat Ali M/s. MH Export Import
- Mr. Safdar Butt, Father of Mr.Azhar Butt of M/s. Track Surgical
- Mother of Mr. Faheem Ahmed of M/s. Strive Sports
- Elder Son of Mr. M. Atif Malik, President Sialkot Tax Bar
- Mr.M. Anwar Father of Mr. Waleed Anwar of M/s. Waleed Mfg. Co
- Haji M. Yaqub of M/s. Medimax Intl

09. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on October 31, 2024
Approval	Approved.

10. Point discussed.	Approval of Statement of Accounts for the month of October 2024 and approval of Minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Accounts and Finance held on November 23, 2024
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Discussion:

The President said that he had informed in the previous EC Meeting that he would discuss the accounts in details in the next meeting.

The President stated that an ERP system was implemented in the Sialkot Chamber to manage accounts. However, when he and the Vice President assumed office, it was observed that the ERP system was not functioning effectively. The software was limited in generating the required reports and conducting analyses. Additionally, the Accounts Officer lacked the confidence to provide the requested reports directly from the system. In some cases, extra time was needed to prepare reports manually using Excel, which raised significant concerns. The President emphasized that an effective ERP system should enable one-click analysis, allowing instant access to financial data for better decision-making. It should provide insights into the Chamber's financial standing, identify areas where expenses were increasing, highlight opportunities for income generation, and facilitate comparative analyses between different periods, such as month-to-month or year-to-year.

The President said that the Office Bearers spent their initial month familiarizing themselves with the operations and identifying priorities. While some improvements were made during this time, full results were not achieved. The Chamber faced issues with software from the company AWM. He had meeting with the AWM Management but they demanded additional fee to add the new modules in the software but he emphasized the need for the software to meet its reporting requirements before discussing further payments. Additionally, the accounts department was also negligent in this matter. They also didn't plan for the future needs and were managing things in a pathetic way. He said that the Sialkot Chamber, being a prestigious and reputable trade body in Pakistan, should have been proactive in managing its finances. Specifically, it implied that the Chamber should have ensured that its bookkeeping practices were organized and transparent enough to comply with potential government demands for financial records. The Chamber, while being a non-profit organization, operated in the service sector, which might expose it to new taxation issues. Proper financial management, including maintaining clear and accessible accounts, would help the Chamber handle any such challenges.

The President informed that the Sialkot Chamber had received a tax notice from PRA, which was a unique case in Pakistan, as only the Sialkot Chamber had received this notice and no other Chamber. He was actively addressing

the matter, and he would provide an update on this issue in the next executive committee meeting. Regarding this, we had planned a meeting with the Chairman of PRA on Monday, said that we were hopeful that the notice would be reversed.

The President said that as concerned to Accounts System, he asked the Accounts Department and the current Chairman of the Accounts Committee if they were advising the entire industry and members to ensure their books of accounts, in order, due to transition in the new tax regime and submit their accounts properly, then where Sialkot Chamber itself stood. So, he consulted with his Office Bearers and the Chairman Committee that he didn't fully understand the situation. It was suggested that there was need to work and accounts should be fixed which they agreed. Then we have had number of meetings on this and had started updating the software and adding provisions in accounts software from the Software company to run a good ERP system. The President said that he was not satisfied with the performance of AWM (software developer). It would be observed **how far they could perform and if they were successful in updating the software according to our requirement, then the agreement would be continued otherwise, it might be reported to Executive Committee to sign agreement with any new capable software company.**

The President stated that it was one of the grey areas on which he had discussed. The second gray area was that the Account Manager of this Chamber was forced to run the books of accounts 15 to 20 days behind schedule, partly due to software restrictions and delayed purchases and billing approvals. From an administrative standpoint, the Vice President addressed these issues, implemented improvements, and made decisions that resulted in better management of purchases. Additionally, the billing criteria were improved. The President then requested Mr. Omer Khalid to give a briefing on the matter.

Mr. Omer Khalid shared that during Mr. Majid Raza Bhutta's tenure in 2014, he was instructed to oversee the Accounts Software, with full autonomy. He said that upon reviewing the then existing system, he noticed that the software was outdated, and therefore contacted AWM Software Company to develop a new accounts software using the latest technology. The Accounts was developed and implemented and the way it was implemented, he, his Office Bearers and Mr. Amir knew about it. The main issue which he had observed was that it should be upgraded according to the need and new technology but could not do so which was also noticed to the President who instructed him to look into it. Mr. Omer Khalid said that AWM Software company was fully cooperating and working on it. The reports were generating according to the requirement. In the meantime, with the consultation of the President and SVP the quotation had been called from international software developer companies but unfortunately no quotation was received yet. He had been pushing Mr. Fraz for a month to call, and email to contact the companies.

The President inquired Mr. Fraz whether any quotation was received or not.

Mr. Fraz replied that a company had confirmed to visit this Chamber on Monday, in this regard.

Mr. Omer Khalid stated that he had compelled AWM to carry out tasks according to the requirement of this Chamber. The President was actively overseeing. Regarding the reports, as mentioned by the President in the comparison, they had now been received and were available.

Mr. Omer discussed the existing manual overtime receipt system for the lower

staff of the Chamber. He said that he observed that it was not the responsibility of himself or the Secretaries to verify, sign, and manually calculate the overtime receipts. Consequently, he instructed that the staff overtime be linked with the attendance machine to automate the calculation alongside the salary. He added that upon visiting the Accounts Office, he discovered that the necessary module for such calculations was not available in the accounting software. He said that then he contacted AWM software developers, who informed him that they were not authorized to add extra modules. In response, he directed AWM to integrate the overtime module into the system within seven days. Mr. Omar Khalid said that they had planned to invite international software development companies to get their services and also focusing on shift to paperless processes, which would improve efficiency, reduce costs, and contribute to environment sustainability.

Mr. Omar Khalid stated that he observed that previously there was no organized system for purchasing items. To address this, a formal quotation system had been implemented. Under this system, three quotations would be requested from various vendors in sealed envelopes. The vendor offering the lowest price would be awarded the purchase order. This procedure would apply to all purchases, including stationery, food, service provider and construction work. He mentioned that by implementing the new quotation procedure system, and interference of the President, a substantial amount of the budget was saved within a month.

The President shared that, according to the working of this Chamber, the Vice President (VP) was responsible for signing the vouchers. The VP had raised concerns with him regarding the billing criteria and the vouchers, stating that there was a need for improvement in this area. He said that one day 35-40 vouchers were presented to him for signing because the VP was absent due to his father's health issue. Upon reviewing the vouchers, he identified some errors and, therefore, blocked the accounts. He assured that the VP had communicated the issue to him correctly and that he had become a witness to the situation. This issue came to his attention during the first week of his tenure.

Afterwards, he called a meeting, inviting the Chairman and the Auditor who had audited the Chamber's accounts, and also presented the annual audit report. He placed 35-40 vouchers in front of them and asked if they were satisfied with them. He inquired whether the Chamber's billing process should be handled this way, to which the auditors replied, "No, we are not satisfied." He then asked, "If he was not satisfied, why did he approve the Chamber's accounts?"

The auditor responded that a third-party internal audit should be appointed or an internal audit team should be developed. The President followed up by asking, "What are you charging for? If you didn't fix the issue, you should have provided suggestions or at least pointed out that these bills were not being prepared according to proper rules and regulations."

He highlighted issues like receiving hand-written bills, instances of bills being altered, and errors such as deductions and corrections on the documents. The President emphasized that they understood the situation, acknowledging that these issues had occurred over the past month, and both the Vice President and he were aware that work was being done in this manner. However, he stressed that a registered bill was necessary. If tax deductions were made, the organization required a registered bill that included the NTN number and sales tax registration number.

The President stated that the Cash Receipt and Bank Statements had been

cross-checked and cleared, with no financial fraud identified, which he wanted to clarify. However, there had been some mismanagement that needed attention. To address this, a new system had been developed where quotations would be called without staff involvement in recommending vendors or setting quantities. He requested the EC to formalize this process by legislating it, sharing their opinions, and ensuring it was documented in the minutes. He emphasized that this should serve as a guide for future office bearers. He then asked the EC Members if they agreed with this approach.

The house unanimously approved that the quotation system would be followed in future purchasing and the staff would not involve and recommend any vendor to purchase the items or set the quantity.

The President emphasized that addressing the accounts of the organization was a crucial and positive decision. They made it clear that there were no accusations of corruption among the SCCI staff, stating that such this view was completely unfounded. Rather, what was identified was mismanagement, which could potentially evolve into a different form in the future. Mismanagement breeds doubt and suspicion, which is why implementing a digital system to manage this would be a prudent solution. This would not only safeguard the staff's integrity but also increase the responsibility of the office bearers because they were the custodian of the house on behalf of the members.

The President drew the attention of the house to the printing of the Bulletin and Annual Report. He stated that upon opening the whole segment, it became clear that a specific person and company were the sole beneficiaries, due to the manner in which the process was handled. He explained that the person was so deeply integrated into the system that he was entrusted with orders automatically. When the reason for this became clear, it was evident that the system had grown accustomed to his practice. The individual consistently delivered high-quality work on time without complaints. Orders were placed with confidence, tasks were completed promptly, and everything was checked and approved with ease. The President said that but the point on which he had a concern was honestly put before the house. He said that 5500 annual general reports were printed. One of our very responsible and very important former President said that he had six companies registered in this Chamber but he had not received a single annual general report in the post and said that it should be checked whether it had been sent or not. The President said that he did not receive it either. The VP said that even he did not receive it.

The matter was discussed in his office and they found another grey area. Then he checked the courier bill which was around Rs. 286,000/-. The Courier company had submitted a list of delivery which was requested to staff twice to submit him but he did not receive yet. The President again requested to submit him the delivery report of courier company and post office which was submitted. The President said that he discussed the issue of printer regarding printing of annual report with few staff members in this Chamber at 6:30 in the evening that he had checked Annual Report rates verbally with his printer who printed his catalogue and brochures etc., and there was a big difference in the rates. So, he suggested that next year's Annual Report be printed after careful consideration. The second issue was that 5,500 copies were printed by paying printing bill of 3.6 million rupees. However, three members had claimed that they did not receive the Annual Report for their 12-13 companies. A question was raised regarding whether the complete quantity of reports was printed or not, as this discrepancy had caused some confusion among the members. After verifying the printer rates, three reliable companies were selected that were already in the Chamber. A new person, in one group, was also included and

reintroduced someone who had been involved in quotations previously. We received quotations from all three, resulting in a saving of three and a half lakh rupees in this purchase. In this way, we saved Rs. 3 lakh by making a one-time decision. Out of this, we also gave work to the person who was plundering but where he was cost effective.

The President mentioned that the real issue was with the individual whose matter was discussed the previous evening at 6:30 PM, that person arrived at the Chamber the following morning at 9:30 AM. While sitting in the VP's office, he requested to meet with him and also demanded that his printing orders be fulfilled. I responded directly, telling him that if he truly had the courage to meet with him, everything was still available and open for discussion. If he wanted to discuss the matter, he was available in his office. However, the gentleman stood up and left without further engagement. The President said that he didn't know why that person wanted me to meet him. He went to the VP's room as per the routine and some of his dearest friends were sitting there. He also met him with along with them. On the same day in the evening, he harassed one of the staff of this Chamber on telephonic call at 6:30 in the evening. He asked what was going on? He should get his work. The President said that he had made it clear to all staff that work would be done with merit, honesty and good faith and nothing else would happen. They should stand up, speak openly and expose whatever was the matter. The President said that he wanted to appreciate the staff of this Chamber that when they had seen that these Office Bearers were not going to compromise and support them, then they explained the thing honesty in good faith.

The President said that person, even started making recommendations from lot of his respectful friends etc., which he ignored. He said that first he wanted to blacklist him, his company with name CNIC and NTN but when he observed that there were innocent people who did not know that they were recommending him and did not know his background, so instead of opening Pandora box, he wrapped everything up and did not consult him. He decided to get the quotations to see whether he gave a comparable price quotation. He gave us a quotation for one or two things which was at the low price of others so he gave him job which was Rs. 200,000/-. The remaining work of seven to eight million rupees was given to others, so he understood that too. Now he had been neutralized. Nobody was recommending him. The staff had also become comfortable. A criterion had also been developed and the office bearers were approving the quotations that were received in making the demand for quotations from the office and the VP himself opened those sealed envelopes. Things have become straightforward and now we had put it on this track, so God willing, it will continue on this track from now on.

The President stated that if they were able to engage and secure competitive rates from just two or three vendors for all such work, it could result in big amount of annual savings.

The President said that the former management had selected a reputable company for arranging food for the guests, ensuring quality meals. It was not a bad decision but the per-head cost was Rs. 1,000 higher. The Vice President identified this issue and took personal initiative to address it. He chose a vendor previously associated with the Chamber and negotiated a menu at more affordable rates. This effort resulted in a savings of Rs. 700,000 last month alone. He said that if this cost-saving arrangement continues, it could save Rs. 8.4 million over the year.

The President said that regarding the Annual General Report and the Magazine he would take the house into confidence in the next executive meeting. He said

that decision about the printing of Annual General Report and Magazine, would be made, in the light of SECP, Sialkot Chamber and Trade Organizations Rules & Act. The legal requirement about printing, under the Trade Act, and Rules would be checked. He said that it was electronic era, so money should not be wasted in printing. He added that the Chamber Magazine was printed quarterly, which was decided in one of the previous President's tenures. Earlier, the bulletin was printed every month. Now he was planning to print 500 copies of the bulletin instead of 5000 copies and send the bulletin to all the members through email. He said that delivery of bulletin which would be sent through e-mail, could be checked while courier details could not be checked like e-mail. The President said that he had asked about the delivery report (lists) only due to the reason to cross verified 30-35 companies whether they had received the annual report or not and if not, then how the delivery of magazine would be handled. He informed that he had also signed magazine courier bill of Rs. 100,000/- approx.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar asked about the name of the Annual Report Printer.

The President replied to visit his office, he won't mention name because he had made this policy "let's ignore what happened in the past".

Mr. Hassan Akbar commended the Office Bearers for their commendable initiatives, emphasizing the importance of sustaining such efforts. He proposed the establishment of quarterly or annual budgets to streamline operations and prevent any mismanagement, similar to the practices followed in corporate settings. Additionally, he highlighted the need for improvement in the quality of crockery used for serving guests, requesting that better-quality options be arranged to enhance hospitality standards.

The President agreed on the points of Mr. Hassan Akbar to set the budget.

Mr. Omer Khalid said that the matter of crockery was in his notice. He said that in this regard, he had planned to purchase own crockery for the chamber, in the meantime, the crockery at the head table had been upgraded immediately. He said that as concerned to the delivery of bulletin due to effective coordination between Chairman of the Post Committee, Ahmed Imtiaz Khan, and the Post Office, he had received the bulletin and also received a call from there. He inquired if the members had also received the bulletin or if it was only the office bearers who got the call. He said that Mr. Ahmed Imtiaz had successfully negotiated a reduction in the delivery rate for the chamber bulletin with the Post Office, lowering the cost from Rs. 23 to Rs. 21. Typically, the Post Office charged the public between Rs. 80 to Rs. 85 for such deliveries.

Malik Naseer Ahmed expressed his gratitude to the President, acknowledging the commendable steps taken, which had significantly eased the Committee's responsibilities. He noted that the improvements in the system were expected to yield positive outcomes. The Committee was fully in touch with Vice President and cooperating with him in any case. He said that as the management had done work on the financial aspects, policy making and purchases, which was very important. He said that there was a next step that the committee was looking into, one such issue involved advances given to vendors for tasks that remained incomplete despite considerable time passing, with no adjustments made for the amounts disbursed. Similarly, to check the advance given to employees were recovering accordingly and the module had been added in the software to ensure that the deduction was made properly. He said that to address these issues more effectively, he requested weekly meetings with the Vice President. Malik Naseer Ahmed clarified that the Committee's role was to

identify problems, while it was the management's responsibility to implement the necessary solutions. He also informed that the Committee was also working regarding the taxation refunds and its technicality. He said that a handsome amount of Rs. 100 (M) would be reimbursed in case the matter was resolved which would be an additional saving.

Mr. Omar Khalid emphasized that members should not perceive the Office Bearers' approach as overly cautious or as an effort to reduce spending arbitrarily. Instead, he clarified that the primary goal was to ensure that members' funds were utilized responsibly and with proper oversight, driven by a commitment to ethical practices and financial accountability.

Mr. Sohail Masood said that he had number of questions relating to the accounts but due to hard work the President was working on it, he had got all his answers. He asked about the detail purchase on daily basis like how many vendors visited, how many inventories were made. He also discussed a system of managing stock through computerized system. He said that under this it could be checked to control, and made order of the stock by bidding before time. The President replied that there were not many items of purchase and inventory. It included stationery and printing jobs which had to be purchased after three to four months. It was being regularly monitored by Mr. Azhar Darr and made inventories regularly.

Malik Naseer Ahmed said that the major expense in the Printing & Stationery was made on purchase of Membership Certificate Books from FPCCI which have case of Rs. 15000/- @ per book.

The President highlighted key areas of expenditure that had been identified for savings. The main expenses were found in the printing of the Annual Reports, the Magazine, and stationery, which were printed every 3-4 months. These three areas were where significant costs had been incurred, but efforts had been made to reduce spending in these areas. Additionally, the purchase of kitchen items had been a large part of the budget, as the goods were typically bought for an entire month. It was used to buy the goods for a month, but he had ordered a 15-day purchase as a test case so that this could also be checked. He said that some over expense were made in the kitchen which could be controlled. He said that saving money in the kitchen did not mean that they would compromise on the hospitality of the members/ guests but would control its loss. The President said that there are still unresolved or unclear areas that need attention, but opening them all at once could cause problems, including system breakdown. The strategy was to maintain the system's stability by tackling these issues gradually. This month, some issues had been highlighted, and more would be raised next month, covering policy matters, benefits, and other concerns. The plan was to first address administrative matters before focusing on policy-related issues. This approach was designed to streamline and resolve matters step by step, ensuring smoother operations.

Mr. Adnan Safdar asked whether there was any limit on advances to employees as mentioned on point No. 5.1.

Mr. President replied that this figure was also very high, but he had not yet paid attention to it. He said that there was a need to make it better.

Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed explained that a policy had been developed for granting advances to employees, where both merit and the loan request were evaluated. Regarding employee loans, a similar policy had been implemented, therein the loan amount was approved by considering the gratuity payable to the employee and the requested loan amount. In exceptional cases, where the

circumstances were unusual, the matter was referred to the Executive Committee for further review and approval.

The President acknowledged that the issue was indeed a policy matter. He stated that he would provide further information regarding the policy during the next meeting after reviewing the relevant details. Furthermore, he requested Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed, as Chairman of the Committee, to evaluate the policy matters from an accounting perspective. This evaluation should determine whether the advances and expenses are aligned with the policy. If discrepancies were found, he urged Mr. Ahmed to identify solutions and submit appropriate recommendations.

The President said that he had been attending number of EC Meetings to present minutes of meetings being Chairman of the Committee and one year as SVP. He shared that he did not hear a particular question being raised in the EC, which he intended to ask. The question was brought to his attention by members who visited his office. Although he was uncertain whether this matter should be addressed in the Executive Committee, he assured that he would present it to the appropriate forum for discussion. The members appreciated the renovation work done in this Chamber but also asked how much money had been spent. He said that a budget should also be set for the renovation work of the chamber, as already suggested by Mr. Hassan Akbar. **He said that in the next executive committee meeting, he would also present the annual estimated budget for the renovation work of this Chamber.**

He shared that people informed him about an expenditure of Rs. 600-700 million on chamber renovations last year, which caught his attention. Despite this, urgent repairs to the roof of Sh. Shafi Hall were neglected. Recognizing its importance, former presidents suggested prioritizing this repair. As a result, he planned to carry out the repairs during the month of Ramzan and aimed to complete it by Eid.

The President said that he had requested to Mr. Azhar Darr to get the quotation for further approval. He mentioned that significant renovation expenses were expected for Shafi Hall this year. However, apart from this, the plan was to suspend all other major renovation projects. Only minor repairs and maintenance would be allowed. This is why this year had been referred as the 'Year of Savings. Another reason was that our reserves had become very low. He explained that two years ago, the chamber had ample financial resources, allowing it to undertake any project it desired. However, last year, these reserves were depleted to such an extent that we reached an alarming financial position. Therefore, he had now planned to rebuild and maintain our reserves this year to mitigate financial risk.

Mr. Sohail Masood emphasized the importance of not only focusing on savings but also exploring ways to generate income. He suggested seeking ideas from members to find potential income-generating opportunities of this Chamber. He also highlighted concerns regarding the Sialkot Business and Commerce Center, a project initiated by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). He said that the Chamber made an investment of Rs. 20 million on its initial construction and played a pivotal role in its completion. However, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) later assumed control of the project, renting out the building. He questioned the circumstances under which the Chamber relinquished control of the center.

The President said that Sialkot Business and Commerce Center (SBCC) building stood as a testament to the Sialkot Chamber's initiative and efforts in constructing this project. The land for this project was officially allocated to the

Sialkot Chamber by the Minister of Industry, Punjab Government. Ownership of this property was unequivocally documented as belonging to the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce, and this status had been legislatively affirmed. He said that the Sialkot Chamber had consistently paid the property tax for this land from the past 12-14 years. Furthermore, the PT-1 document had been issued in favour of the Sialkot Chamber, reinforcing its ownership. The ongoing payment of property taxes by the Chamber served as solid evidence of its rightful ownership of the SBCC. This authority and responsibility were explicitly granted to the Sialkot Chamber by the Minister of Industry, confirming its entitlement and ownership over the property. By getting the authority, the project was designed and its construction started. Approximately 18-20 crore rupees were spent on it by the Sialkot Chamber. Its two basements and one ground floor were constructed. After this, the institution of SMEDA came into existence. Before that, the institution of SMEDA did not exist. The institution of SMEDA was created to financially support small and medium enterprises and to promote their projects and to promote commerce activities. The SMEDA approached the Sialkot Chamber and shown their desire to complete the project under partnership on which the Sialkot Chamber agreed. The Sialkot Chamber presented all ownership documents of the SBCC Land which SMEDA checked from their legal team, and after taking the legal opinion, they expressed confidence to be partners with the Sialkot Chamber, in this project, and the agreement was signed. After that the SMEDA invested as much money on it as the Sialkot Chamber had invested and the construction was completed. As per the agreement there was to be formed a company under section 42 with the partnership of Sialkot Chamber and SMEDA but it was not clear why SMEDA did not form a company or allowed it to be formed till now which was a question mark. Secondly, a board was formed under which its affairs were looked after. The Sialkot Chamber was also its board member. We had some objections in some of its financial and administrative matters, which we kept raising in various meetings. When the Chamber highlighted those issues by the Sialkot Chamber, the SMEDA abolished that board and took the charge. The intention to abolish the board had not been understood.

The President informed that the matter had been raised at every relevant forum. He further noted that the former President had written a detailed letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, outlining the current operational status of the SBCC. According to the President, some officers within SMEDA appeared to be obstructing the inclusion of the Sialkot Chamber in the SBCC affairs. To address these concerns, a Zoom meeting was organized on October 1 by the Prime Minister's Secretariat, involving SMEDA officials. During the meeting, Dr. Noman Idrees Butt expressed strong disapproval of SMEDA's attitude toward the Chamber's seniors regarding the project, presenting his concerns in a composed and professional manner.

The President said that he was also present in the meeting. During the meeting, he raised concerns about the behavior of Mr. Raja Hussain, the representative of SMEDA. He made it clear that his conduct undermined the decorum of the meeting which was not acceptable. He emphasized that SMEDA should adhere to the rights and responsibilities outlined in its agreement with the Chamber. The actions and statements made by Mr. Raja Hussain were a clear deviation from the terms of the agreement, which SMEDA itself committed. Furthermore, he clarified that the allegations being made by Mr. Raja Hussain were baseless and had no relevance to the chamber. Following this, another meeting was convened, hosted by the Secretary of Industry. The attendees included representatives from the Secretary Industry, SMEDA, and SCCI. During the meeting, the Secretary Industry asked us to address a protest raised by SMEDA. However, we clarified that the protest was not as portrayed by SMEDA but rather originated from our side, concerning their conduct and approach to

handling issues. The Secretary Industry attentively listened to our concerns and emphasized the importance of maintaining decorum in such meetings. He urged both parties to refrain from unilateral actions and to focus on resolving the matters constructively. He also requested us to provide the relevant documents, a same request echoed by the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The required documents were duly submitted to both entities. However, more than a month had passed since this second meeting, and there had been no follow-up, neither another meeting nor any further communication. Despite our efforts to demonstrate that the claims and objections raised by SMEDA were baseless and false, no progress or resolution had been made on this matter. The President said that the political leadership of the Sialkot was also onboard.

Mr. Salman Majeed Sheikh asked the President whether the construction work of Mini Meeting Room had also been excluded in your plan.

The President replied that the members had drawn attention to the mini-meeting room. It would not be reconstructed, but would be upgraded according to good environment point of view.

Mr. Salman Majeed Sheikh asked about the mike system of the Sh. Shafi Hall. Secondly, he suggested that the Chamber should take the initiative to launch a "Go Green Project" and work towards its implementation wherever feasible. This initiative could involve reducing printing agenda etc., to make it paperless.

The President said that as concerned to printing agenda, the important thing was that, it was delivered to the executive committee with a responsibility that the members could read and prepare in advance to give input. He mentioned that the agenda could be delivered either in soft copy or hard copy. If the house accepted, it would be distributed via email, and members should get its print themselves. Secondly, a hard copy could be sent to each member which they would bring to the meeting. However, a separate copy would not be printed for placement at the meeting. He also remarked that the current efforts to identify gray areas and improve processes, along with making savings, could have been done by previous office bearers, as many members used to attend meetings without proper preparation or reviewing the minutes beforehand.

The Secretary General said that the exercise to send the agenda to members through email had been done three or four times, in the past, but could not succeed due to the reason that some members still used to request a printed copy from the Executive Committee, which was provided to them.

Mr. Omar Khalid emphasized the importance of members studying the agenda in advance and highlighting any questions or points they wished to discuss during the meeting. He mentioned that he had already reviewed the agenda sent to him, marked the points for discussion, and had brought his copy with him. As a result, he did not require the printed copies of the agenda placed on the table. **He suggested that in the future, members should bring the agenda sent to them and that the printed copies provided at the meeting should be avoided.**

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar agreed on the view point of Mr. Omer Khalid.

The President stated that in the upcoming meeting, more attention would be given to the house, as there were matters that needed to be addressed. The aim was to make improvements wherever possible, with a focus on enhancing the overall functioning of the Chamber. He emphasized that the goal was not to target any individual, employee, or former office bearers. The three office bearers would do their utmost, guided by their intellect, to implement

improvements that would benefit the Chamber and ensure that resources were used properly.

Mr. Omar Khalid mentioned that the sound system in the meeting hall was malfunctioning, prompting the call for quotations to purchase a new system. A quotation of approximately 2.2 million was received for replacing the entire system. He discussed the issue with Mr. Faraz, the IT Officer, and suggested that the existing system be repaired instead. Following this, Mr. Faraz arranged for the system to be repaired, in Lahore, at a cost of 18,000. The system was now functioning perfectly.

The Secretary General informed that Sialkot International Airport Ltd., had committed to grant Rs. 2.5 for the repair of Sh. Shafi Hall.

The President asked the Secretary General whether the commitment of Rs. 2.5 million from SIAL was made in writing or verbally. The Secretary General confirmed that it was in writing. **The President then directed that a letter be written to SIAL, referencing their commitment of Rs. 2.5 million. Afterwards, the President indicated that he would follow up with the Chairman.**

Participants	The President, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Mr. Adnan Safdar, Mr. Salman Majeed Sheikh, Mr. Sohail Masood, Malik Naseer Ahmed and The Secretary General.
Approval	Approved

11. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of two meetings of the Departmental Committee on SME/Training held on October 29, 2024 and November 12, 2024
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Mr. Fizan Akbar said that we had two Departmental Committee Meetings. In the first meeting, the members discussed and recommended 19 different training programs, which were mentioned in the minutes. The 2nd meeting was organized to plan the activities for organizing the Tech Conference in Sialkot. He explained that the event would provide an opportunity for technology service providers and IT experts to interact with the business community, share insights, showcase innovations, and explore emerging trends. Mr. Fizan Akbar shared that the Committee had planned to organize a seminar on IT exports. Mr. Hisham Sarwar, CEO of Innovista would be the main speaker.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar suggested to organize a seminar on Cost Accounting.

Mr. Fizan Akbar replied that it was already planned to organize seminar on Cost & Management and Mr. Asad Naseer Malik had been requested, in this regard.

The President said that the SME Committee had always done a great job and every President had appreciated it. It provided great input on a monthly basis, trained new members and provided them with solutions to their business related issues.

Mr. Omar Khalid asked Mr. Fizan Akbar about the topic of seminar being planned to conduct.

Mr. Fizan Akbar replied that the seminar would be conducted on the subject of "How to Develop Sialkot's IT Industry for Global Exports".

Mr. Omer Khalid informed Mr. Fizan Akbar that he had reviewed the minutes and observed that the SME Committee was overlapping subjects of other committees, including the e-commerce committee, chaired by Mr. Waqas Raza, and the Information Technology committee, which he himself Chaired. He proposed to Mr. Fizan Akbar that the three Chairmen should convene a

preliminary meeting before the seminar to delineate responsibilities and ensure proper allocation of duties. Additionally, Mr. Omar requested Mr. Fizan to share IT-related issues with him to facilitate the development of a roadmap for the committee's responsibilities.

Mr. Fizan Akbar replied that Mr. Waqas Raza was present at the meeting; however, you (Mr. Omer) were on a foreign tour.

The President commended the Vice President for correctly drawing attention to the matter. He emphasized that if a separate committee was formed for a specific topic, it should partner with the SME Committee to ensure effective collaboration. He pointed out that while the SME Committee represented members solely from the SME sector, the IT Committee included members from the entire industry.

The President further remarked that invitations for the event should not come exclusively from the SME Committee but from all three committees: the IT Committee, SME Committee, and E-Commerce Committee. He stressed the importance of ensuring maximum participation of members, given the high stature of the guest speaker, a renowned and influential figure in Pakistan's IT sector. He congratulated Mr. Fizan Akbar for selecting an exceptional speaker, describing him as a role model for the IT sector, capable of offering valuable direction to the Sialkot Chamber. Additionally, the President acknowledged Mian Khalil, the secretary of the group, for bringing this matter to light. He mentioned that MOU might have been signed to connect the guest speaker with Sialkot Chamber in a consultancy capacity, with a final decision to be made after the seminar.

Participants	The President, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar and Mr. Fizan Akbar.
Approval	Approved.

12. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Young Entrepreneurs held on November 11, 2024.
Approval	Approved.

13. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Garrison HQ/Cantonment Board Affairs held on November 14, 2024
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Discussion:

Mr. Khawar Spall thanked the President and said that the issues regarding the Cantonment Board faced by members were discussed in the meeting. He said that the minutes were placed on the table and if any member had an issue, it might be discussed.

The President stated that according to the latest updates, there were currently no pending issues, and everything was running smoothly. Ongoing concerns had been noted by the Chairman. The President further mentioned that he recently attended a high-profile meeting with the Chairman, where they reviewed all matters and assured each other of full cooperation. He praised Mr. Khawar Spall as a highly deserving individual who quickly took charge of the issues, establishing excellent communication with both the chamber and members, as well as, on the cantonment authorities. The President expressed his gratitude and hope that the smooth progress will continue.

Mr. Khawar Spall stated that a meeting had been scheduled with the Station Commander for next week to address the ongoing issues, most of which were related to the Station Commander and the Cantonment Board. He mentioned that a letter regarding the meeting had been sent, and the meeting would take

place once confirmation was received. Additionally, Mr. Spall highlighted the full cooperation of the GOC, who authorized the Chairman Committee or officers to attest the permission forms for various locations, such as Polo Ground and Chawinda Ground.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi asked about the attestation of the documents which was explained by the President.

The President requested Mr. Khawar Spall to give an update regarding Kashmir Park and the work they had done on it and to provide them some items, as requested by General Sb.

Mr. Khawar Spall said that General Sahib had requested this Chamber for the arrangement of Generator for Kashmir Park.

The President mentioned that during the meeting, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 15th Division drew attention to the Kashmir Park, which had been developed for public use. He emphasized that the military was taking full ownership of the park and covering its maintenance expenses through income generated from various sources, such as the shops being built within the park. The GOC also highlighted some outstanding tasks, including the installation of a backup generator, the addition of a grill to the boundary wall, and the display of flexes showcasing Sialkot's dignitaries, businesses, and products, with backlighting installed at the main gate and front of the park. While the GOC clarified that he was not forcing anyone, he suggested that if the business community was willing, they could sponsor these additional expenses.

Mr. Khawar Spall said that the products would be allowed to display without mentioning the company name.

The President said that international brand name could be mentioned. He asked the house whether some expense should be approved to sponsor or not.

Mr. Hassan Akbar expressed that whenever they pass through the Kashmir Park, they feel happy knowing that a public space had been constructed for the city's residents. He emphasized that Chamber should contribute in some way to support it.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi inquired to Khawar Spall whether any work had been done regarding the three questions raised by Dr. Maryam concerning We Exhibit 2025 in the committee meeting.

Mr. Khawar Spall responded that this matter pertained to the Station Commander of the Cantonment. A meeting had been scheduled with him next week, and once it took place, this matter would be discussed with him.

Mr. Salman Majeed Sheikh stated that Kashmir Park was under the control of 15 DIV, which was financially strong. Additionally, they would easily generate income by building shops and other commercial facilities within the park. He also mentioned that we would not have benefited from or been able to highlight the sponsorship of the backup generator.

The President stated that the matter was not to be highlighted, as it was part of a public welfare project. He pointed out that there were no places in the municipal corporation area where the public could walk or spend time, unlike in the cantonment area. He praised the efforts of 15 DIV for developing a walking track where hundreds of people now walk each morning and evening. Additionally, they had installed a complete sound system with proper team

management. The President suggested that if the Chamber allocated 5-10 million, there would be no further issues.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar also opposed to sponsor any amount for Kashmir Park.

Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan highlighted the traffic congestion at Quaid-e-Azam Chowk, particularly during morning school hours, due to the current timing of the traffic signals. He suggested that the signal at this location was unnecessary and proposed turning it off during the morning to ensure smoother traffic flow. He requested the Chairman to include this matter in the agenda for discussion with the GOC.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar pointed out that the traffic signal operated for 30 seconds on Green and 70 seconds off, which contributed to the issue.

Mr. Khurram Javed Sethi further noted that the road opposite Quaid-e-Azam Road was closed due to security reasons. He proposed that the traffic signal for that side could be removed.

Participants	The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Mr. Hassan Akbar, Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi, Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan and Mr. Salman Majeed Sheikh.
Approval	Approved.

14. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Shipping/Dry port held on November 19, 2024.
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<u>Discussion:</u>	
Mr. Tariq Hussain, Chairman of the Committee, thanked President SCCI and informed the house that the Departmental Committee on Shipping/ Dryport held its first meeting of 2024-25. He also informed that the Committee had set its targets for the year and highlighted the core issues on which the Committee would focus this year. He drew attention of the house towards important matters related to Shipping/ Dryport. He shared that he worked very hard on the Regional Comparison of port and shipping charges in China, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. He also informed that on December 04, 2024, the Committee would hold a meeting in which all the interested members of the house would be invited. He shared that based on the information; the committee would devise a joint action plan for its implementation. He highlighted that a series of complaints from the members of this Chamber had been received in the past regarding the high billing of Sialkot Dryport Trust. He gave a comparison of the (LCL Charges) of the following countries: Bangladesh US\$ 3 – US\$ 6 per CBM, India US\$ 3 – US\$ 6 per CBM, Pakistan US\$ 60 – US\$ 85 per CBM Considering the huge difference in the port and shipping charges, there was a need to take up the said issue with the high-ups. He informed the house that the volume of Sialkot's cargo was 5,000 to 6,000 CBM per month and its difference go up to PKR 120 million. He also highlighted that this money was paid by the exporters of Sialkot. He informed the house that he already planned to cope with this matter but needed support from this Chamber. The President agreed with the point of view of Mr. Tariq Hussain and assured full cooperation of this Chamber, in this regard. Mr. Tariq Hussain highlighted an issue related to the bribery of the Terminal Operators due to the unavailability of prescribed SOPs and tariffs. He said that no such example of a Terminal Operator operating without these two mandatory requirements was available worldwide. He informed the house that fixed charges named lift-on lift-off (LoLo) charges on which the container was booked was PKR 4,500/-, whereas terminal operators charged the cargo agents	

from PKR 10,000/- to PKR 25,000/-.

He shared that each terminal was earning approximately PKR 1 million per month, and in Sialkot currently, two terminals were operating. This issue also needed to be addressed immediately. He also shared that the industry faced many problems due to the unavailability of empty containers for export purposes. He appreciated Mr. Amir Majeed Sheikh, Former Vice President, SCCI, who invited CMA CGM, Shipping Company to the Sialkot Chamber and resolved the issue of unavailability of containers in Sialkot, within three months, as CMA CGM committed in the meeting.

He informed the house that Hapag-Lloyd established a helpdesk for the facilitation of the business community and after its establishment, a lot of issues were resolved. He suggested that Sialkot Chamber should inform its members regarding the establishment of helpdesk. He informed the house that overcharging from PKR 25,000 to PKR 45,000 was made to take containers from Lahore to Sialkot. He suggested that from the platform of this Chamber, all the operating shipping lines would be invited to get relief for the exporters of Sialkot. He informed the house that in situations like COVID-19, the Government could issue a General Order for waiver on all those consignments that were held at the ports due to such an uncontrollable situation.

He shared that the Governments of India, China, and Bangladesh had given 50% to 70% waiver on held consignments at different ports, but the Government of Pakistan had not given any waiver. He said that provision was available in the Law that the Government can issue a General Order for the waiver. He requested that a letter be written on the said issue to the Collector to facilitate the affected people.

The President SCCI suggested to have a meeting with the Chairman Sialkot Dryport Trust, Sambrial, before the meeting planned to be held on December 04, 2024 and discuss with him about the outcome of the meeting with the Chairman.

Mr. Omer Khalid Vice President SCCI suggested that charges should be fixed with the shipping line upon the availability of the Vehicle.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi inquired whether these charges belonged to Terminal or SDPT.

Mr. Tariq Hussain replied that Terminal Operators were taking these receipt charges. He informed the house that Containers were available with the terminal operators but they refused to hand over to the forwarders without bribe.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi suggested that the Departmental Committee on Shipping/ Dryport should invite all remaining shipping lines operating in Pakistan for flexibility in their rates for the facilitation of the business community.

The President also suggested that in meeting with the Chairman SDPT, the issue of overbilling should be taken up with him.

Mr. Tariq Hussain replied that Consolidators were making money in the shape of overbilling not SDPT.

The President requested to make necessary changes in the minutes of the meeting accordingly as mentioned on point No. 3.

Mr. Omer Khalid highlighted the issue related to DHL import shipments.	
Mr. Tariq Hussain endorsed the point of view of Mr. Omer and shared that a workable solution could only be made upon the fixation of charges. He shared that the initiation of Cargo Express Train from Sialkot could also prove helpful in addressing the issues related to cargo movement.	
Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, shared that Mr. Tassawar Butt should also be taken on board for the said project as he had done lot of workings on it.	
Mr. Tariq Hussain stated that the government had launched the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) to support exports. However, some individuals had begun misusing the scheme, which had come to the attention of the relevant authorities. He mentioned that the Chief Policy Officer had informed him of plans to set a specific time frame for the scheme. When consulted for his opinion, he suggested a tenure of 30 months.	
Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi elaborated that the government had categorized exporters under the scheme based on export performance. He noted that if complaints were raised against any entity, their category could be downgraded. He emphasized that instead of altering the tenure of the scheme, the authorities should focus on ensuring strict compliance with the criteria established under the EFS. He suggested that the tenure of five years should remain unchanged.	
Mr. Tariq Hussain proposed that a formal letter be sent from the platform of Sialkot Chamber to the relevant authorities to address these concerns.	
Mr. Omer Khalid highlighted that the issue of granting licenses under the Export Facilitation Scheme was also discussed during the meeting.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Mr. Omer Khalid, Syed Ahtesham Mazhar and Mr. Tariq Hussain.
Approval	Approved.

15. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Media held on November 22, 2024.
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Muhammad Ejaz Ghauri expressed his gratitude and emphasized that this was the first meeting of the committee where a large number of members had participated. Several issues related to the media were discussed, and two members from the media group were invited to get their input. He highlighted that the media representatives were asked to focus on presenting the positive aspects. After thorough discussion, the committee unanimously recommended creation of a WhatsApp group for the committee, through which media representatives would share their footage and clippings. These would be recorded by the SCCI Librarian to analyze the performance of media channels and newspapers. A performance shield will be presented at the end of the year based on this analysis. The President, while appreciating the efforts of Mr. Muhammad Ejaz Ghauree being Chairman remarked that he was doing an excellent job. The President assured full cooperation from himself and the Office Bearers to Mr. Ghauree concerning all committee-related matters. Mr. Muhammad Eljaz Ghauri shared that recently he had attended an inauguration ceremony where he had the opportunity to meet several brilliant students studying journalism. He proposed that these talented individuals should be engaged and involved in chamber activities by contributing their ideas and	

work.	
In response, the President recommended inviting these students to join the relevant committee. He further suggested providing them with guidance about the chamber's operations, encouraging them to undertake specific projects, and presenting their progress at the next meeting.	
Participants	The President and Mr. Muhammad Ejaz Ghauree.
Approval	Approved.

16. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of two emergent meetings of the Departmental Committee on Fairs & Exhibitions/Delegations held on October 31, 2024 and November 11, 2024.
Discussion: Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi mentioned that two meetings were held during the last month. The first meeting took place on October 31, 2024, following the Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Riaz Ud Din Sheikh, other leadership, and executive members attended the meeting. It was decided during the meeting that the delegations would not be sent under the platform of the Sialkot Chamber, and efforts would focus on promoting exhibitions. Afterwards, we held meetings with the DG-TDAP, in which Sheikh Sahib was also present. DG, TDAP suggested to participate in a single-country exhibition being held in Jeddah. In response, it was requested to DG TDAP to reduce the application fee, as the members were hesitant to participate due to the high fee. Additionally, 40 members had attended the Riyadh exhibition in September, which left them disappointed. Moreover, the Arab Health and Medica exhibitions were scheduled on the same dates as the Jeddah exhibition. In consideration of our request, DG TDAP got approval to reduce the fee to Rs. 200,000, which was made applicable to participants across Pakistan. Mr. Waseem informed that the Chamber had received 32 confirmed drafts from members out of 36 available stands. Some companies had booked two stands each. He informed that he personally requested Sheikh Sahib to attend the exhibition, emphasizing the importance of witnessing how a single-country exhibition unfolded. Sheikh Sahib replied that he did not attend such exhibitions but he was requested to attend in order to observe the event personally, if he had time. It was noted that recent single-country exhibitions in Ethiopia and Egypt were not fruitful. On November 15, we held a meeting with the Director General (DG) of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). With the approval of the Committee, we presented the following requests, which were addressed as follows: ◦ The request for a 3x4 stand was approved. ◦ The Jeddah Expo Center was confirmed as the venue. ◦ The provision of stand accessories was requested and accepted. ◦ The DG agreed to facilitate the clearance of samples, provided that HS codes for the samples are shared. ◦ Additionally, it was requested that TDAP take responsibility for delivering the cleared samples to the exhibitors' stalls. The DG assured us that he would discuss this with higher authorities and seek the necessary approvals. ◦ The matter of visa processing was raised, and the DG requested a consolidated list of exhibitors for streamlined processing. ◦ The Committee was actively working on securing discounted ticket rates, excess baggage allowances, and other travel-related benefits for exhibitors.	

Mr. Waseem mentioned that a meeting with various trade bodies in Sialkot was held, where it was agreed that the Sialkot Chamber would organize some exhibitions while others would be managed by the Trade associations. The exhibitions not organized by the Chamber would be arranged by the Sports Goods Association. During these discussions, it was proposed that the Sialkot Chamber would hold a single-country exhibition, roadshows, and two Canton Shows. He was mentioned that PSGMEA would take the lead for ISPO, TEXPO Karachi, and Engineering and Healthcare Expo Lahore, while SIMAP would lead the International Surgical Instruments Exhibition for the Made in Sialkot Pavilion or Sialkot 2050. The members had agreed on the name "Made in Sialkot Pavilion," but the DG of TDAP responded that this name couldn't be approved because it implies that "Made in Sialkot" is part of "Made in Pakistan." Instead, he suggested branding it as "Sialkot 2050." The Engineering and Health Exhibition was announced, and we held an online meeting with DG TDAP, Khawaja Masood from Sports Goods, Zeeshan Tariq from Surgical, Ammar, and 2-3 officers from TDAP. During the meeting, Mr. Zeeshan highlighted that the exhibition, related to the surgical industry, should be handed over to them. Consequently, we had scheduled a follow-up meeting with him on Monday to discuss the matter further in the office, and determine the necessary steps to move forward. The leadership proposed the creation of a pavilion named *Sialkot 2050*, where all the Trade Bodies of Sialkot would represent. During the meeting, the Gloves and Leather Garments Association requested the inclusion of their two shows. They were asked to submit a formal written request, but no such recommendation was received. Mr. Waseem provided this update and mentioned that any member could direct their questions to him for clarification.

Mr. Hassan Akbar discussed about the marketing and advertising exhibition/trade fairs.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi shared that a participation fee of Rs. 10,000/- was charged to each exhibitor along with their application. He mentioned that if a separate stall for the Sialkot Chamber was created, where the Chamber's documentary would be displayed, it would likely require the involvement of one or two employees from the Sialkot Chamber to manage the stall. The fee collected would be utilized to cover those additional expenses. In the meeting, it was proposed that members should be charged separately for advertising, and that the Sialkot Chamber should manage its own advertising. It was mentioned that advertising on Facebook was not very expensive. He also noted having recently seen advertisements for the Canton Fair in Pakistan, even though they did not need such advertising. Mr. Waseem said that it was also proposed that SCCI would contribute PKR 1 million as part of the marketing budget to support comprehensive promotion for the Expo but it was the subject to the approval of the participants who were participating in the exhibition.

Participants	Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi and Mr. Hassan Akbar.
Approval	Approved.

17. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with Rana Umar Farooq, District Police Officer Sialkot held on November 02, 2024.
Approval	Approved.

18. Point discussed.	Approval of report of meeting with a delegation from the Lahore School of Economics held on November 04, 2024.
Approval	Approved.

19. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with Officers (BS-19) of 36 th Senior Management Course from the National Institute of Management NIM Islamabad held on November 06, 2024.
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Approval	Approved.
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20. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Leather Industry+ Leather Working Group held on November 18, 2024.
Syed Ahtesham Mazhar stated that this was the first meeting of the committee. Mr. Sohail Masood also participated in the meeting. The following points were discussed:- • A seminar on the Leather Working Group was planned to be organized next week. • The scope and potential for artificial leather development in Pakistan were explored. • Research and Development (R&D) in SMEs. It was observed that there was a significant lack of R&D in the leather sector's small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which had been producing the same products for the past 25 years. The committee recommended approaching LUMS to explore its potential role in assisting the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) in establishing R&D departments at various factories. An online meeting was conducted with LUMS, and they agreed to submit a proposal on the matter. Mr. Omar Khalid suggested to Syed Ahtesham Mazhar to arrange a group visit to LUMS, including representatives from various industries such as sports, surgical instruments, and leather. Each participant could present a proposal related to their product, requesting LUMS' assistance in addressing industry-specific challenges. This approach would ensure collective benefits for the entire industrial sector.	
Participants	Mr. Omer Khalid and Syed Ahtesham Mazhar.
Approval	Approved.

21. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Project Committee on Sialkot Tannery Zone held on November 21, 2024.
<u>Discussion:</u> Syed Ahtesham Mazhar provided an update to the members regarding the Sialkot Tannery Zone project initiated in 2009 under the platform of the Sialkot Chamber. He explained that the project aimed to relocate all tanneries from the city to a dedicated zone. A total of 500 plots had been allocated to members, with 100-150 members had initiated construction work to shift there. He noted that the Tannery Zone Board had cancelled the allotments of certain members due to non-payment issues. These members, under the name "Matasreen," submitted applications against the project management to various forums, including UNIDO, the Anti-Corruption Department, and NAB. While NAB had previously conducted an inquiry and resolved the matter. However, the group re-approached NAB, leading to an ongoing investigation. Mr. Ahtesham highlighted that Sialkot's political leadership was also engaged in resolving the project's challenges. He expressed gratitude to the President for his proactive role in advancing the project, engaging with local political leaders and stakeholders, and supporting efforts to reach a mutual resolution. Notices had been issued to plot owners to expedite the relocation process, and the Board was making all efforts to shift the tanneries to the zone promptly. He further shared that a seminar would be organized at SCCI to provide updates on the project. He thanked the President for responding to the Committee's request to install citywide billboards to promote the relocation of tanneries to the zone. The President said that Sialkot Tannery Zone project was developed, designed,	

and operated with transparency, and it was beyond comprehension that any kind of NAB inquiry should be conducted on it. He held meetings with the Tannery Zone Management including Chaudhry Zulfiqar A. Hayat, Malik Naseer and Syed Ahtesham Mazhar and obtained their input and found that the project was being deliberately sabotaged by some people, who were spreading propaganda against it and scandalized it and succeeded to make inquiry in NAB. Number of meetings were held on the subject in first week of his tenure because he was concerned about why this project was being scandalized and if it would not be resolved immediately, it would have negative effect on Chamber's future planned projects. The management of Tannery Zone requested that the Sialkot Chamber should play its role to resolve the issue. They assured every kind of cooperation from the Tannery Zone Management and allottees.

The President stated that the Sialkot Chamber held meetings with NAB and successfully provided the required information according to their questionnaire, which helped secure relief for the Sialkot Tannery Zone Management. He emphasized that the Tannery Zone had maintained comprehensive files for all allottees, organized plot-wise and allotment-wise. However, certain administrative matters revealed incomplete files for some allottees. Upon addressing these concerns in the NAB questionnaire, the necessary updates were made to the files, ensuring compliance with their specified standards. These efforts resolved a major objection. The President expressed gratitude to the SCCI staff, who took on this additional responsibility outside their regular duties. He particularly acknowledged the efforts of Mr. Faraz, Mr. Salman, Mr. Ammar, and the other staff, who worked tirelessly on his request. He also extended his thanks to the Accounts Department for their assistance.

The President addressed the issue involving the "Mutasreen," who had alleged injustice and filed a case with the NAB. Contrary to their claims, they were not expelled but were instead engaged in fraudulent activities with ulterior motives. The President disclosed that he had invited the Mutasreen multiple times to his chamber to understand their intentions. During these meetings, they demanded plots, to which the President and others, including Mr. Imran Akbar, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik, and Leadership, agreed to allocate. However, when offered a solution, the Mutasreen rejected it and abruptly ended discussions. Over the past three years, similar interactions occurred. At one point, all 16 Mutasreen were invited to review the map in the chamber and identify their preferred plots. They initially agreed to consider the offer but later left without providing any feedback. When asked why they filed a case with NAB if they did not intend to purchase the plots, it became evident that they were not victims but were attempting to sabotage the project. Currently, the so-called leader of the Mutasreen, Mr. Tahir Shafiq Mughal, had exaggerated the matter by publishing allegations against two prominent businessmen in the Jang newspaper. These accusations suggested unfair allocation ("Bandar Baant") of plots in the Tannery Zone. However, the President emphasized that such claims were unsubstantiated and had not been validated by any forum, including NAB.

The President expressed his desire to facilitate the stakeholders in acquiring the plots. However, he noted that their demands were fundamentally unacceptable due to the following reasons:-

- They refused to pay at the current rates. Instead, they insisted on paying the price previously agreed upon with the leadership and STAGL management.
- They rejected the criteria established under STAGL's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the government's regulations, asserting that such rules should not apply to them.

- They demanded that the plots be transferred to their names first, prior to signing any documents.
- They requested exemption from inquiries about the payment of plots for two years. Additionally, they insisted that plots be allotted immediately and that no construction requirements be imposed until the payments were fully cleared.

The President said that he had also made it clear to the leadership that these matters were not as Matasreen were presenting themselves as victims. He pointed out that when they approached NAB (National Accountability Bureau), they claimed there were over 200 victims. However, NAB had not yet received any official list of these individuals. He urged NAB to demand and scrutinize this list, questioning why the organization had not prioritized this matter.

The President clarified that the real victims were those who had been contributing money for 18 years, still waiting for the project's implementation. Over 100 tanneries were under construction, with about 70 either completing or progressing to their second lintel phase. Additionally, 18-20 tanneries had completed the first lintel, and hundred had even finished constructing their walls. The situation had become difficult since the case was filed with NAB. This had discouraged stakeholders who were already involved. Even those who were engaged in construction have halted their work, citing a common perception that projects failed, wherever, NAB got involved. However, they raised a critical question: on what basis should they proceed under such uncertain circumstances?

The President stated that he had been informed about the non-installation of the GEPCO electricity connection and the incomplete grid station. These issues were attributed to delayed payments from PSIC and increased connection costs due to escalation. He questioned how the tanneries could operate without electricity and emphasized that the department responsible for the cost escalation should bear the expense. He assured that once the electricity connection was provided, the tannery zone could be made operational within six months.

The President highlighted that UNIDO had provided a grant exceeding Rs. One billion and had published an 80-page report, which he had reviewed randomly. In the report's annexure, UNIDO expressed complete satisfaction with the project's funding, expenses, methodology, and time frame. Additionally, a dedicated employee was assigned to report, on a daily basis, and UNIDO's representative visited twice a year for three to five days to oversee the project's progress. This representative also acknowledged that the Sialkot Tannery Zone had become a model for tanneries worldwide. It was also 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. The Sialkot Tannery Zone was built in a more advanced style compared to the Tannery Zones in Turkey and Egypt that UNDO had previously funded. He said that likewise, he also made it clear to the political leadership and in newspapers that all funds received from the government at different times were within the purview of TDAP and the Deputy Commissioner, who had the authority to sign on them. There was no evidence of corruption. The management of STAGL or the allottees had no involvement in any financial corruption. NAB is tasked with investigating financial scams, but in this case, the inquiry was incorrectly focusing on the files of allottees, while leaving out those individuals who should actually be investigated. We were satisfied with this clarification. It was requested that this inquiry be withdrawn, or if the concern was financial mismanagement, the TDAP signatories, the Commissioner, and the Deputy Commissioner should be the ones questioned, as we bear no

responsibility for these matters.

The President addressed concerns about the Mutasreen group, stating that further meetings with them were denied due to their persistent attempts to tarnish the project's reputation. He mentioned that political leadership and the Deputy Commissioner jointly issued a statement in newspapers last Saturday, warning that if the tannery zone was not operational by December 31, the matter would be taken up in Parliament and investigated by NAB.

The President expressed satisfaction with this stance, emphasizing that necessary government action should be taken to ensure the project's progress. He highlighted the importance of focusing attention on those attempting to create controversy about the project, affirming that the Chamber was committed to its responsibilities. Construction work by the allottees was ongoing, with key project components progressing: the UNIDO waste treatment plant was nearing completion (95-100%) and expected to be operational by March 2025, while the water treatment plant was projected for completion before March, possibly by December 31. The Chrome Recovery Plant was scheduled for completion by December 31. These developments were being achieved through allocated funding, fulfilling the obligations. The President distanced himself from any group-related controversies, referencing the political leadership and Deputy Commissioner's stance. He noted the Chamber's proactive role over the past two months, including public outreach through city signboard advertisements. He invited members seeking plots to visit his office, ensuring facilitation whether they had previously applied or not.

The President also condemned the misinformation spread by an individual, supported by two businessmen who had neither visited the Sialkot Chamber nor pursued their case for plots. He considered their actions as driven by nasty intent and reaffirmed the Chamber's commitment to the project's success.

The President emphasized the importance of honest communication without fear. He expressed his desire to call both parties involved in the controversy to the Chamber to present their demands and goals. He criticized their tendency to oppose constructive efforts and manipulate the situation with disrespectful behavior. Regarding Mr. Tahir, the President shared that he had invited him to his office five times over two months, treating him with respect despite Mr. Tahir's negative remarks about the tannery zone's management. Despite patience and efforts to resolve the issue, including an offer to provide plots to everyone involved, progress was hindered by objections raised by Mr. Tahir. The President also explained that Mr. Tahir was requested to sign an agreement, which was to be finalized with Mr. Riaz Ud Din Sheikh. A draft agreement, prepared with mutual input was handed to Mr. Tahir and his associates. However, they raised an objection to one point six days later. Despite attempts to accommodate Mr. Tahir's demands, no consensus was reached, and the agreement remained unsigned.

The President stated that Mr. Tahir contacted him the day before yesterday to request a meeting, to which he agreed. During their discussion, Mr. Tahir objected to the President's decision to allot plots to some members of Matasreen. The President responded, questioning what was wrong with his decision, as the plots were allocated to members who had contacted him after coordination with STAGL management. Mr. Tahir raised concerns about how the President could allot a plot without their consent. In response, the President asked Mr. Tahir to come to his office to discuss the matter. Mr. Tahir came to the President's office along with four other individuals. After listening to their concerns, the President did not let the four members leave until their cases had been resolved, fulfilling all necessary requirements, and allotted them their plots.

These four members later shared their experiences with others, clarifying the truth about Mr. Tahir's actions and advising other to approach the Chamber's President directly to resolve their plot issues. This caused Mr. Tahir to react negatively, sending WhatsApp messages with a confrontational tone. Additionally, Mr. Tahir created a community group of 980 members for propaganda purposes, intentionally excluding the four members who had opposed him.

The President said that Mr. Tahir returned to his office along with three other individuals. The President assured Mr. Tahir that he would first address the concerns related to his plot. He explained that although the plot number had already been allocated to Mr. Tahir, his pending dues were yet unresolved. After this explanation, Mr. Tahir changed his stance, denying that he had accepted the plot and questioning the President's authority to allocate it to him. During the discussion, the three individuals accompanying Mr. Tahir opposed his version and his behavior. They confirmed that the President had resolved their concerns by allocating them their respective plots and fully supported his actions. While departing, Tahir Mughal made the statement that there had previously been a dispute with the Sialkot Chamber. Now, with Khawaja Muhammad Asif also involved, he would be prepared to exaggerate matters further. In response, the President condemned him and said that Khawaja Muhammad Asif was facilitating to make the Tannery Zone operational.

The President also shared that 10 applications from the Matasreen Group had been received. He expressed optimism that these would be accommodated by Monday, December 20, 2024 and their plots would be allocated accordingly. The President outlined the criteria for the plot allotments. The criteria for allotting mandatory plots in the tannery zone were that individuals who owned a tannery but had not been allocated a plot in the tannery zone would receive a mandatory plot. The leader of the victims submitted a list of **138 individuals** requiring **250 kanals of land**. As per the agreement, uniform criteria were to be applied to all tannery allotments. Upon reviewing the list, it was found that **39 individuals** already had a tannery (either rented or owned), while the remaining were artisans from the tanneries. This was verified by the management of the tannery zone. Out of the 39 individuals, 14 had already started the process of accommodation.

The President mentioned that, on the other side, there were a few noticeable aspects which he also identified during the Tannery Zone meeting held yesterday. He highlighted and proposed the following:

- Individuals or entities who had been allotted more land than they require should surrender the excess area. This would create space to accommodate others in need.
- Allottees who held more than one plot, even if fully paid for it, but do not require them, should release the surplus plots. The payment made for those plots would be returned to them at the same rate at which the plots were resold.
- Allottees who had been allocated plots but had not made complete payments must settle their dues promptly to retain their allotments.

The board members appreciated these proposals, and consensus was achieved among the 12-15 participants of the STAGL Committee meeting. The President expressed confidence that the management of the Tannery Zone, along with the committee chairman, Mr. Ahtesham Gillani, would ensure the effective implementation of these recommendations.

The President expressed his full involvement in the project, highlighting the support and coordination provided by the Tannery Zone management. He further expressed his hope that the project would reach its conclusion by December 31, 2024.	
Participants	The President and Syed Ahtesham Mazhar
Approval	Approved.

22. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Project Committee on Islamic Commercial Bank held on November 22, 2024
Discussion: The President stated that this was the first meeting of the project since the Committee's formation. He shared that the Committee had invited a consultant from Al-Nasay Solutions Pvt. Ltd, a Karachi-based company. The consultant, a retired Joint Director of the State Bank, had contributed significantly to reforms at the State Bank based on recommendations from his company and himself. Al-Nasay had extensive experience in Islamic banking, having assisted two conventional banks in their conversion to Islamic commercial banks and participated in shaping various Islamic banking policies. The President also mentioned discussions with another consultant from KBMG, a Lahore-based company. While the Committee's primary focus was on securing the services of Al-Nasay, the project remained in its preliminary stage. The meeting served to deliberate on ideas and gather insights for moving forward. The President outlined the key steps for establishing the new bank:- • The total equity required was Rs 10 billion. • The bank would initially open 10 branches, as per the rules of the State Bank. • There would be a minimum of seven members on the Board of Directors. • The Board of Directors would contribute 20% of the total equity, amounting to Rs 2 billion. • Rs 3 billion would come from the general public, with no specific limit on the number of contributors. • Additionally, Rs 5 billion, or 50% of the total equity, would also come from the general public. This approach ensures a balanced funding structure with contributions from the Board of Directors and public investors. There were two potential approaches to proceed. The first, which was commonly employed, involved converting the entity into a public limited company and having it listed on the stock exchange. The steps would include determining the number of board members, declaring their roles, and issuing equity accordingly. In this structure, the board of directors would collectively contribute 20% of the equity, either equally or as they see fit. Investors who commit to contributing 30% would have their equity assigned accordingly, while the remaining 50% would be allocated to the general public through public subscription. The initial share price would be established as the baseline value, which would adhere to standard rules preventing shareholders from selling their shares for three years. The second method involved implementing the model based on the Airline and Airport structure, where all members of the board of directors were announced, and the project did not enter the stock exchange at the initial stage. This approach was a successful model we've previously applied in both the airport and airline sectors. While we were not ignoring this model, we had not yet finalized its design. We had requested the guest to provide a briefing in the next meeting to explore the possibility of structuring this bank under the framework of our proven airport and airline models. The President said that complete details including setting up of branches,	

capital, equity etc., were mentioned in the minutes.	
Participants	The President
Approval	Approved.

23. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Women Entrepreneurs held on November 27, 2024
Discussion: Mrs. Gulzaib Waqas Awan shared that the President and Senior Vice President also attended the meeting and expressed their satisfaction with the efforts of the Women Resource Center (WRC) and the active participation of its members. They encouraged and appreciated these initiatives Mrs. Gulzaib Waqas Awan said that it provided updates on various matters, including the functioning of the WRC, assistance offered on business-related issues through the WRC office, loan schemes facilitated by the State Bank of Pakistan for WRC members, the Business Facilitation Centre, the TDAP Annual Calendar of Exhibitions, the third edition of WE-Exhibit, and an upcoming single-country exhibition in Jeddah. (Further details were documented in the meeting minutes.) She also requested Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi to ensure that details of exhibitions were communicated separately to the WRC, similar to how they were shared with other members Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodi responded that the exhibition had been circulated twice to all members of this Chamber as well as Women's Chamber. He mentioned that he would instruct Ammar to ensure that, in the future, the exhibitions would be circulated separately to the Women's Resource Centre (WRC) as well.	
Participants	Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi and Mrs. Gulzaib Waqas Awan
Approval	Approved.

24 Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Membership/Bye-Laws held on November 28, 2024.
Approval	Approved.

Any Other Point:

25. The members highlighted incidents of social media account hacking and the receipt of fraudulent messages demanding money. The President urged all Members to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions to secure their online accounts and avoid falling victim to such scams.

26. Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry inquired about the retirement age of SCCI staff as per their Service Rules.

The President responded that this matter had also been brought to his attention and was discussed, but no further action had been taken. He noted that the retirement age for employees was at 60 years but now had been increased to 65 years, with administrative procedures. Furthermore, he confirmed that the Secretary General had informed about this change in August 2023.

Mr. Haseeb Tahir stated that, according to the Government Policy, the set age of retirement was 60 years. He questioned why the Chamber had increased and set the retirement age at 65 years.

The President stated that during his tenure, he did not receive input from the former President on the matter. However, he confirmed that he had received all the related documents, which were on hold. According to these documents, the issue was

approved through the HR Committee and the Executive Committee, leading to the revision of the HR policy. He added that if the members wished to revisit the matter, they could do so, as he did not have an answer to why the changes were implemented.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi suggested that the previous management could be consulted for further clarification, as they would be in a better position to explain the matter.

Mr. Hassan Akbar inquired about the technical aspects related to increasing the retirement age from 60 to 65. He specifically asked whether this change would apply only to employees who have already reached the age of 60 or if it would be applied retrospectively to other employees as well.

The President replied that according to the documentation, no employee was above the age of 60 years at that time, although some were nearing the age of 60.

Mr. Hassan Akbar inquired about the effects, if this age limit was amended.

The President responded that it would first be necessary to determine if anyone fell within this category. If the Executive Committee approved the age limit of 60 years and recommended revisiting the previous decision, he would then present this recommendation to the HR Committee for further discussion. After this process, he would bring the matter back to you for further input.

Mr. Muhammad Abid proposed that staff members could be hired on a contractual basis after reaching the age of 60 years

The President stated that the SCCI's HR policy aligns with the Federal Government's HR Policy. Therefore, if the age limit were to be revised from 65 to 60, any Chamber employee affected by this change could be accommodated through contractual service or could be offered re-appointment. He emphasized that this would only be possible, if the house approved to re-address the issue.

Mr. Hassan Akbar stated that the Government HR policy had been adopted by large groups and multinational companies in Pakistan, ensuring continuity in employment and facilitating the promotion of employees, which should not have been interrupted.

The President inquired whether it could be considered that the house did not agree with the previous decision.

Mr. Adnan Safdar inquired whether, in the event any employee would forced to retire as a result of reversing the previous decision, the Chamber had a policy to ensure that the replacement was properly trained to assume the role of the departing employee. He also sought to know the practices or policies implemented by other Chambers, in this regard.

The President responded that the matter had not been thoroughly analyzed. However, if any employee were adversely affected by the reversal of the decision, they could continue employment by the HR Committee. It was never intended that this would lead to an immediate retirement.

Mr. Azhar Iqbal Darr informed the House that the decision to increase the age limit from 60 to 65 was made by the management because two applications were received from Mr. Rehmat and Mr. Sarwar, who were 60 years or older, requesting an extension of their contracts.

The President replied that the name of both employees was not mentioned in the recorded minutes of meeting.

Mr. Azhar Iqbal Darr replied that the name of Mr. Muhammad Sarwar was mentioned and the contract of Mr. Rehmat was also renewed in that meeting.

The President requested Mr. Azhar to present the minutes post-meeting as previously informed.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar remarked that the policy to increase the age limit from 60 to 65 years was not applicable to all employees.

The President clarified that it was a uniform policy for all.

Mr. Azhar Iqbal Darr further explained that the decision to raise the age limit to 65 years stemmed from management's consideration of requests for contract extensions for Mr. Rehmat Ali and Mr. Sarwar, and emphasized that the revised policy would be applicable to everyone. He added that the Membership Department was requested to extend the contract of Mr. Rehmat Ali, as no replacement employee was available to fulfill his responsibilities.

The President emphasized the critical importance of ensuring that "no alternative employee was available." He stated that it was essential to create opportunities, provide options, and trained employees capable of assuming responsibilities and fostering growth. He noted that employees should be trained similarly to how government institutions prepare their personnel. This approach ensured continuity and sustainability, eliminating concerns about what might happen when someone retired, as the system would function smoothly like a well-maintained chain.

Mr. Omer Khalid stated that to the best of his understanding, the previous executive committee had increased the age limit at 60 to 65 years, which was informed by Mr. Azhar Iqbal Darr.

Mr. Omar Khalid stated that the service period of Rehmat Sahib should have been extended because there was no viable replacement to his role. In contrast, Sarwar's position could have been easily replaced with an alternative.

Mr. Azhar Darr replied that Mr. Sarwar would have approached someone, in this regard.

The President noted a sentence in the HR Policy stating: *"The Executive Committee may grant an extension up to a period that may not exceed 2 years, subject to the proposed Human Resource Committee."* According to the HR Policy, a limit of 2 years was established for extensions. He inquired how many years Mr. Rehmat had been working on a contract basis.

Mr. Azhar Iqbal Darr confirmed that this was the fourth year of his continued contract service.

The President raised concern that this arrangement appeared to violate HR policies and clarified that no further extensions would be approved under the HR policy moving forward. Additionally, the President asked for the end date of Mr. Rehmat's current extension.

Mr. Azhar Darr responded that the extension period was expected to conclude in October of the next year.

The President requested Mr. Azhar Darr to discuss, an alternative solution, after the meeting to ensure the smooth functioning of the Membership Department in the event that Mr. Rehmat's contract was not renewed next year. He also reconfirmed from the house that they disagree with the decision to increase the age limit to 65 years and requested a review to restore it in accordance with the government policy of maintaining the age limit at 60 years which was reconfirmed by the members.

The President stated that the matter of increasing the age limit from 60 to 65 had come to their attention, but he had set it aside, considering that the previous Office Bearers must have had specific circumstances under which they approved it. Thus, the matter was left unaddressed. He mentioned that this issue had been under discussion among the members of the Chamber. Since the matter was raised again today, he took the opportunity to share some thoughts with the members. He explained that in this Chamber, the Deputy Secretaries worked under the Secretary General, whereas in other Chambers, such as Lahore and Gujranwala, there was an Additional Secretary's post in between. He emphasized the importance of the Additional Secretary position, noting that technically, if there was only one Deputy Secretary, it could be assumed that upon the retirement of the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary would be promoted to that position. However, if there were multiple Deputy Secretaries, all of whom were competent, it could become difficult to make a decision about who should be promoted. To address this, he had discussions with the Presidents of the Lahore and Gujranwala Chambers. They explained that they had created the position of Additional Secretary. While the Gujranwala Chamber had only one Additional Deputy Secretary, the Lahore Chamber had several.

The President requested the House to approve the creation of an Additional Secretary position in this Chamber, aligning with practices adopted by other Chambers. He stated that this proposal falls within the legal purview.

The House unanimously approved creation of the Additional Secretary position in this Chamber.

The President further inquired, "Did the House authorize hiring new staff for this position or promoting capable personnel from the existing staff?"

The House approved this mandate as well.

27. Mr. Aamir Mahmood stated that while the age limit was being discussed in the House, he would like to propose that the salaries of staff and their duties be addressed in the next executive meeting, as these were matters involving public funds.

The President replied that attention would gradually be brought to the issues mentioned during the next executive meeting. All matters related to the entire account would need to be studied and addressed. Since this was an important point, he emphasized it, and we would discuss it first.

28. Mr. Aamir Mahmood stated that the agenda for the executive meeting, which he had received, was in an open envelope. He proposed that in the future, the agenda be sent to members in a sealed envelope, as it contained critical and sensitive information related to the meeting.

The President responded, stating that the best option would be for Mr. Fraz to personally update the members' email addresses, either through direct communication or a phone call, and confirm the update by sending and receiving a test email. The Chamber would then send the agenda via email, and members

should print it themselves. A hard copy would also be provided here in the meeting. The President emphasized that members need to review the minutes and, if they take responsibility for printing the documents themselves and bringing them to the meeting, the entire issue would be resolved.

Mr. Omer Khalid suggested that a hard copy of the agenda would be delivered, while a second copy would not be printed for use during the meeting.

The President said that there was issue of delivery of agenda.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi emphasized that if the agenda was sent through email, only the relevant questions should be printed out, while a complete copy of agenda would be provided here.

The President said that the agenda would be sent to all members with sealed envelope.

29. Mr. Aamer Mahmood stated that this Chamber had always shown great respect to its members, offering tea and other refreshments in a appreciative manner. He suggested that members should consider contributing on a monthly basis to support these services.

Mr. Omer Khalid responded by emphasizing that the time he dedicated to the Chamber was of great value to them. He informed that he had received numerous applications requesting assistance with items such as school uniforms, bags, medicines, etc. He proposed that a fund be established, with contributions from the members, to support and address these applications.

The President stated that such applications could be handled by the Office Bearers themselves. If necessary, the application could be discussed with the members to seek their contributions for support. The President also mentioned that the lunch provided to the EC Members was sponsored by this Chamber, while the routine daily lunch prepared in this Chamber was personally paid by him.

The SVP and VP requested to share their contributions, but the President did not agree.

30. The President highlighted that the challenges and demands from the members for a future-oriented and research-based approach had increased. In order to meet these requirements, it was necessary to create additional positions within the chamber. He also informed that some posts were vacant. He requested the house to approve the following posts:

- One Assistant Accountant (vacant due to resignation)
- One Trainee Information Technology
- One Telephone Operator (vacant due to the resignation)
- Three Research and Development (R&D) Assistants

The President assured the house that these positions would be advertised, and appointments would be made in accordance with the HR Policy. He assured that the process would be completed during the month of December.

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

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