

THE SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD ON JUNE 30, 2026

01. A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held on June 30, 2026 at 03:00 a.m. at the Sialkot Chamber.

02. Mr. Muhammad Arshad, Senior Vice President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry presided over the meeting. He thanked the members for attending the meeting.

03. The proceedings of the meeting started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Arshad Jamil Chaudhary.

04. The following members attended the meeting:

• Syed Ahtesham Mazhar	President
• Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad	Senior Vice President
• Mr. Salman Sheikh	Vice President
• Mr. Ikram Ul Haq	-Member-
• Mr. Adnan Safdar	-do-
• Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry	-do-
• Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan	-do-
• Mr. Hassan Akbar	-do-
• Mr. Jawad Khalid	-do-
• Ms. Kinza Ijaz	-do-
• Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Asad	-do-
• Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam	-do-
• Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman	-do-
• Mr. Sohail Masood	-do-

05. Leave of Absence

• Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi	-Member-
• Mr. Omer Khalid	-do-
• Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik	-do-
• Mr. Aamer Mahmood	-do-
• Mr. Haseeb Tahir	-do-
• Mr. Mehtab Maqsood	-do-
• Ms. Syeda Ayesha Wadood	-do-

06. Members who could not attend the meeting.

• Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi	-do-
• Mr. Muhammad Abid	-do-

07. Special Invitees

- Malik Naseer Ahmed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Accounts.
- Mr. Akmal Javed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Banking.

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

- Wife of Ch. M. Nawaz M/s. Nawaz Surgical
- Mr. Zaheer Lone, M/s. City Embroiders
- Mr. Zia-ur-Rehman Ch. M/s. Fox & Associates

09. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on June 04, 2026
Approval	Approved.

10. Point discussed.	Approval of Statement of Accounts for the month of May 2026 and approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Accounts & Finance held on June 24, 2026.
<u>Discussion.</u> Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed informed the House that the Accounts Committee had thoroughly scrutinized the accounts, and the minutes of the Committee meeting were attached. He stated that since the financial year was drawing to a close, the Committee had recommended that all advances and other outstanding account heads be properly adjusted and accounted for before the closing of the financial year. He further informed that payments relating to the renovation work of Sheikh Muhammad Shafi Hall had been duly accounted for. He added that if any member had questions or required any clarification regarding the accounts, he could ask, otherwise, the details were already provided in the accounts. Mr. Sohail Masood informed the House that the matter regarding the increase in the electricity bill was discussed in the Accounts Committee meeting. The Committee had suggested verifying the performance of the solar power system to ascertain the number of electricity units being generated. He further stated that he had received the inspection report, which confirmed that the solar system was functioning properly. However, he observed that there might have been a temporary issue during the previous month, which should be investigated further. Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed clarified that the Accounts Committee had highlighted the matter because of the unusual increase in the electricity bill and recommended that the possible causes be examined. Mr. Ikram Ul Haq recalled that a similar issue had arisen during the previous year. At that time, the solar system was inspected by M/s. Sultani & Co., and it was discovered that some of the solar panels were not functioning properly. He suggested that a comprehensive inspection of the solar system be conducted again to ensure that all panels were operating properly.	
Participants	Mr. Sohail Masood, Mr. Ikram Ul Haq and Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed.
Approval	Approved.

11. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of Joint meeting of the Departmental Committees on Banking Affairs and Small Business Development held on June 18, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Akmal Javed Khokhar, Chairman, Banking Affairs Committee, presented the minutes of the Committee meeting and briefed the Executive Committee on the matters discussed therein. He informed the House that various banking-related issues received from members had been taken up with the concerned banks and were resolved successfully. He further stated that the Committee had decided to convene a high-level coordination meeting with the Branch Managers and Trade Heads of all major commercial banks during the coming week to discuss and address the banking issues being faced by the business community. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Senior Vice President, observed that the members were facing a number of banking-related issues and appreciated the initiative taken by the Banking Affairs Committee. He suggested that Mr. Akmal should continue pursuing these	

matters with the banks in line with the discussions held during the Committee meeting to ensure timely resolution of members' concerns.

Mr. Salman Sheikh, suggested that the Committee should also explore and compile information regarding the special banking facilities, financing schemes, and incentives being offered by commercial banks and the State Bank of Pakistan for young entrepreneurs to promote and expand their businesses. He proposed that such information should be circulated among the members for their awareness and benefit.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Senior Vice President, further suggested that a representative of the State Bank of Pakistan should also be invited to participate in the proposed meeting with the commercial banks so that policy-related matters and members' concerns could be discussed directly with the regulator.

Sheikh Muhammad Shahid Inam observed that although banks were required to implement the policies and regulations issued by the State Bank uniformly, their practices varied from bank to bank. He pointed out that exporters, particularly small and micro exporters, were facing unnecessary difficulties due to differing documentation requirements and account handling procedures. He suggested that the matter be taken up with the concerned authorities to ensure uniform implementation of State Bank policies and to facilitate the business community.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad said that the issue involved both commercial banks and the State Bank generally operate according to their own policies and business interests. He noted that while banks may offer different facilities and incentives to their customers, it is not always possible for the State Bank to direct them on such commercial matters.

He suggested that the most appropriate way forward would be to convene a meeting of the Banking Affairs Committee. He proposed inviting the heads of all commercial banks operating in the region, along with representatives of the State Bank of Pakistan, to participate in a detailed discussion on the issue.

Participants	Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Mr. Salman Sheikh, Sheikh Muhammad Shahid Inam and Akmal Javed Khokhar
Approval	Approved.

12. Point discussed.	Approval of Report of the Emergent Meeting of the Departmental Committee on Dry Port/Airport/Shipping/Railway/Transportation Held on June 27, 2026.
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Discussion:	
Mr. Salman Mir DS R&D informed the House that an emergent meeting of Departmental Committee on Dry Port/Airport/Shipping/Railway/Transportation was convened to discuss the complaint of M/s RAQ Industries against M/s Boss Express, Sialkot, regarding the unauthorized replacement of commercial documents for an export shipment. He said that after detailed deliberations, the Committee found M/s Boss Express responsible and recommended that it submit a written apology to the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry, with a copy to M/s RAQ Industries, assuring that such an incident would not recur again. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad informed the members about an important issue regarding the clearance of surgical samples by the relevant regulatory authorities. He explained that export and import samples were detained due to regulatory requirements, and members often seek the Chamber's assistance in such cases. He clarified that only exporters holding manufacturer status were eligible to obtain the relevant exemption letter for the clearance of samples. Members who did not possess	

manufacturer status could not currently avail themselves of this facility.

Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman informed the meeting that he had received a sample parcel from his customer valued at US\$44 with a weight of approximately 0.5 kg. He stated that Customs had charged Rs. 54,000 as duty, which he considered excessively high. Upon inquiry, he was informed that the freight charges mentioned on the shipment had also been included in the customs valuation, resulting in the higher duty assessment.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad stated that a similar case had previously been reported by Mr. Sohail Masood, which had already been referred to the Consumer Court. He requested Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman to submit the complete details of his case in writing so that it could also be taken up through the appropriate legal forum.

Mr. Sohail Masood said that Customs had imposed approximately Rs. 25,000 duty on a sample shipment containing 70-gram gloves. Although the declared sample value was US\$10, the shipment also included US\$50 as freight charges, and Customs assessed duty on the total declared amount, including freight. He expressed concern over the valuation method and the difficulties faced by exporters in obtaining low-value sample shipments without excessive duty.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad explained that the local Customs representatives did not have the authority to amend or revise such assessments. He informed that the matter would be pursued before the Consumer Court during the following week and assured that development in the case would be shared with the members in the next meeting.

Participants	Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Sheikh Atiq ur Rehman and Mr. Sohail Masood.
Approval	Approved.

13 Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of H.E. Mr. Timothy Kane, High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan held on June 03, 2026.
Approval	Approved.

14. Point discussed.	Approval of report of meeting with a delegation from Privatization Commission, Government of Pakistan held on June 05, 2026.
Approval	Approved.

15. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Industry Academia linkages held on June 08, 2026.
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Discussion:

Mr. Salman Sheikh informed the members that the Committee had deliberated on three key agenda items: (i) the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) forwarded to the University of Management & Technology (UMT), Sialkot; (ii) a presentation by TNH L'école Mondiale, Sialkot Campus; and (iii) internship and industry placement opportunities for students of local educational institutions.

He observed that the linkage between industry and academia had remained weak for many years, resulting in a shortage of skilled human resources to meet the evolving needs of the local industry. He highlighted the growing challenges faced by exporters, particularly in product diversification, product development, and the availability of skilled manpower. He further emphasized the acute shortage of qualified Quality Assurance Managers capable of effectively implementing international certification requirements

within industrial organizations.

Mr. Salman Sheikh informed the members that the Chamber was making efforts to strengthen collaboration with technical universities and educational institutions in Sialkot to bridge these gaps. He suggested that educational institutions should introduce and strengthen courses focusing on Business Ethics, Entrepreneurship, Personal Grooming, Professional Communication, Leadership Development, and other industry-oriented skills to better prepare graduates for the workplace. He also informed the members that a study tour to the laboratories of NUST, Islamabad, was being planned to explore advanced research and testing facilities and invited interested members to participate.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq endorsed the observations made by Mr. Salman Sheikh and emphasized that the shortage of qualified managers and professionals had become a serious challenge, particularly with the increasing number of international certifications required by export-oriented industries. He stated that successful compliance depended not only on documentation but also on strong team building, effective management systems, and trained personnel. He suggested that the matter should be taken up by the Chairman of the Surgical Instruments Committee to formulate practical recommendations for addressing these challenges. He recalled that during the establishment of the National Compliance Centre (NCC), the Chamber had already proposed that the Government should launch structured training programs to develop qualified compliance professionals and introduce a licensing mechanism for consultants to ensure their competence and accountability. He observed that many consultants currently operating in the market lacked the necessary qualifications and practical expertise, resulting in ineffective implementation of certification systems. Sharing his company's experience in obtaining MDR certification, Mr. Ikram Ul Haq informed the members that only a handful of companies in Pakistan had successfully achieved MDR certification.

He pointed out that there remained a significant shortage of competent consultants and trained quality professionals in Pakistan, particularly in Sialkot, where industries were increasingly required to comply with international standards such as MDR and Leather Working Group (LWG) certification. He proposed that the Government, TDAP, or other relevant institutions should introduce specialized capacity-building programs, sponsor consultants for international training, and establish a formal licensing and certification framework for consultants. He emphasized that strengthening the pool of qualified professionals was essential for enhancing the international competitiveness of Sialkot's export industry and urged the Chamber to continue pursuing this matter with the concerned authorities.

Participants	Mr. Salman Sheikh and Mr. Ikram Ul Haq.
Approval	Approved.

16. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of H.E. Ms. Mary O' Neill, Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan held on June 09, 2026.
Approval	Approved.

17 Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of H.E. Mr. Pierre Jordaan, Acting High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan held on June 10, 2026.
Approval	Approved.

18 Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting to view and discuss the Speech of Federal Budget 2026-27 held on June 12, 2026.
Approval	Approved.

19	Point discussed.	Approval of Report on Health Walk held on June 14, 2026 and MOUs with Hospitals and Lab.
Approval		Approved.

20.	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of H.E. Mr. Titus M.J. Abu Basutu, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Pakistan held on June 15, 2026
Approval		Approved.

21.	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Machinery, Chemicals & Related sector held on June 16, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u>		
Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad informed the Committee that he was actively working on various product sectors to facilitate the local industry. He shared that the organizers of Textile Asia, one of the country's leading industrial exhibitions, had planned a visit to the Sialkot Chamber on the following day to discuss the possibility of organizing a joint awareness and promotional session in Sialkot. He explained that Textile Asia had traditionally been organized in Karachi and later expanded to Lahore and Faisalabad. For the first time, however, the organizers had decided to focus on Sialkot due to its growing industrial significance. He added that the exhibition would cover a wide range of industrial sectors, including textiles, surgical instruments, printing technologies, buttons, accessories, and other allied industries. He further mentioned that a large number of Chinese companies were also expected to participate, showcasing advanced machinery, cutting technologies, manufacturing solutions, and other industrial innovations. Mr. Salman Sheikh emphasized the importance of creating greater awareness among local manufacturers and exporters and requested Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad to provide an annual calendar of relevant national and international exhibitions. He suggested that the Chamber could circulate this information among its members in advance to encourage wider participation.		
Participants		Mr. Salman Sheikh and Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad.
Approval		Approved.

22.	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of H.E. Rear Admiral Fred Senevirathne (Rtd) High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan held on June 16, 2026.
Approval		Approved.

23	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on Proposed Alignment of Sialkot Ring Road Project held on June 17, 2026.
Approval		Approved.

24	Point discussed.	Approval of Report of meeting with ISMO, an entity of Ministry of Energy (Power Division) held on June 17, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u>		
Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad stated that reservations regarding the proposed privatization of GEPCO had been raised by the labour union. He explained that the workers were concerned that privatization could adversely affect employees by resulting in job insecurity and potential unemployment.		
Participants		Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad
Approval		Approved.

25	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting on visit of Capt. (Retd) Dost Muhammad, District Police Officer Sialkot held on June 22, 2026
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad informed the Committee that a meeting had been held with the District Police Officer (DPO) to discuss the key civic and traffic-related issues being faced in Sialkot. He stated that the meeting was convened to deliberate on matters such as traffic congestion, the increasing number of road accidents, and the poor condition of roads, including potholes, which were causing inconvenience to commuters and affecting the smooth flow of traffic.		
Participants		Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad.
Approval		Approved.

26	Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Membership/Bye-Laws held on June 24, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Salman Sheikh informed the House that 732 Associate Class Members and 16 Corporate Class Members had been enrolled during the month. The Secretariat informed the House that the Chamber's total membership had exceeded 100,000 members. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad and Mr. Sohail Masood suggested that the Chamber should celebrate this significant achievement in recognition of reaching the landmark of 100,000 memberships. Mr. Adnan Safdar appreciated the efforts of the Membership Department for maintaining such an extensive membership record. Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan inquired about the Chamber's membership fee structure in comparison with other Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Pakistan. The Secretariat informed the House that the Sialkot Chamber's membership fee was comparatively lower than that of many other Chambers in Pakistan. It was further stated that some Chambers also charged additional fees for providing urgent services. Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad suggested that the Sialkot Chamber should also consider revising its fee structure in line with other Chambers and introduce appropriate charges for urgent services. Sheikh Muhammad Shahid Inam, however, was of the view that the existing fee structure should remain unchanged, as many trade associations cited the Sialkot Chamber's reasonable fee as a benchmark. He further inquired about the number of active Associate and Corporate Class Members, and the Secretariat provided the relevant figures to the satisfaction of the House.		
Participants		Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Mr. Salman Sheikh, Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad, Sheikh Muhammad Shahid Inam, Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan and Secretariat.
Approval		Approved.

Any Other Point

27. Mr. Ikram Ul Haq requested Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad to apprise the House of the current status of the Ring Road Project. He further stated that he wished to discuss the matter in order to clarify his position regarding the efforts made during his tenure.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad informed the House that following a meeting with the affected landowners (Mutasreen), a sub-committee under the supervision of Mr. Riaz Ud Din Sheikh was constituted to deliberate on the matter. The sub-committee subsequently met with Khawaja Muhammad Asif. Mr. Murad Arshad said that in the Committee the matter was discussed in details and the members suggested following:

1. To utilize the interchanges of the Sialkot–Lahore Motorway as a ring road by constructing additional interchanges on Pasrur Road and Aimanabad Road to improve connectivity and facilitate traffic movement around Sialkot.
2. To construct a Ring Road alongside the canals surrounding the city as a long-term solution to ease traffic congestion and improve urban connectivity.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq stated that he wished to place his position on record regarding the Sialkot Ring Road Project and to clarify the role played by him during his tenure as President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry. He informed the House that after the recent marking of the proposed Ring Road alignment during the Hajj period, a large number of members of the business community and affected property owners contacted him expressing serious concerns. He said that several prominent businessmen, including Mr. Abdul Ghafoor, Mr. Rana Imran, Mr. Hafiz Junaid Sundal and Sheikh Sohail Kapur informed him that it was being alleged that the current Ring Road alignment had been approved and endorsed by SCCI during his Presidency. He added that his name was also being quoted, in this regard, creating confusion among the business community and the general public and was adversely affecting both his personal reputation and the goodwill of the Chamber.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq categorically denied these allegations and clarified that neither he, in his personal capacity nor as President of SCCI, had ever approved, endorsed or recommended the present Ring Road alignment. He stated that throughout his tenure he had consistently supported the concept of the Sialkot Ring Road Project because of its potential to improve connectivity, reduce traffic congestion, facilitate industrial growth and contribute to the economic development of the region. However, his support was always for the project in principle and should not be taken as approval of the present alignment.

He further informed the House that he had attended only the initial meeting convened at the office of the Deputy Commissioner, where the original proposal for a Ring Road of approximately 53.360 kilometers was presented. During that meeting, suggestions were discussed to reduce the overall length of the project to less than 50 kilometers. He stated that after this initial meeting he was neither invited to any subsequent meetings nor participated in any deliberations relating to the finalization of the alignment. Likewise, he was not invited to accompany the official site visits undertaken by the concerned authorities. He recalled that on one occasion he was invited only to a luncheon after the site visit, where senior government officials informed him that the proposed route had already been inspected in the field. He emphasized that he was neither shown the route nor provided with any alignment map, site plan or final project documents for his review or comments.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq stated that the issue regarding the impact of the alignment on residential houses, commercial establishments and industrial units came to his knowledge only after the recent marking exercise commenced. He emphasized that the Chamber also did not possess any document clearly identifying the final alignment or the properties likely to be affected. Therefore, it was incorrect and unjustified to suggest that either SCCI or he had deliberately concealed such information from the business community. (An e-mail in this regard had already been received from Mr. Ikram Ul Haq)

28. Mr. Adnan Safdar said that the Pak Medical Center (PMC) was offering a 15% discount on medicines to the public, whereas the Sialkot Chamber Med Pharmacy was currently providing a 12% discount. He sought clarification regarding the difference in the discount rates and inquired how PMC Medical Stores were able to offer a higher discount compared to the Chamber's pharmacy.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq stated that the matter should be taken up in the meeting of the SCCI Med Pharmacy Committee for detailed deliberation. He suggested that the Committee review the existing pricing policy.

Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad informed the House that the PMC Board had adopted a policy of procuring medicines only from pharmaceutical companies willing to offer a 15% discount.

29. Mr. Adnan Safdar suggested that the roles of the Chamber's Departmental Committee on Surgical and the Surgical Manufacturing Association of Pakistan should be clearly defined. He said that both organizations were working on similar issues, which sometimes created confusion and delayed their resolution. Referring to the DRAP issue, he observed that despite the efforts of both organizations, the matter could not be resolved effectively. He proposed that the Sialkot Chamber, being the larger trade body and in the spirit of showing its greatness, should authorize the Surgical Manufacturing Association of Pakistan to take the lead on all surgical-related matters. The Chamber should refer such issues to the Association for follow-up. He also suggested that representatives of the Association should regularly attend the Chamber's Surgical Committee meetings and brief the members on the progress of ongoing issues.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad said that the issue could be addressed through better coordination between the Chamber's Departmental Committee on Surgical and the Surgical Manufacturing Association of Pakistan. He suggested that whenever the Departmental Committees of this Chamber formed, two or three Executive Committee members from the Trade Bodies in Sialkot should also be included. This would ensure that the organizations would remain on the same page and present a unified stance on important industry issues. Referring to the DRAP matter, he informed the House that the Government had constituted a Surgical Council, Chaired by Mr. Fazal Jillani, to deliberate on the issue. He said that he had attended one of its meetings, wherein around twenty participants expressed opposing opinions. While such differences were natural, he emphasized that greater coordination between the Chamber and the Surgical Manufacturing Association before participating in such forums would help develop a common position and strengthen the industry's representation.

The Secretary General informed the House that representatives of the Trade Bodies had always been included as members of the Chamber's Surgical Departmental Committee in the past.

30. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad shared the newly prepared Trade Directory containing the details of around 6,000 active members. He informed the House that the entire cost of publishing the directory had been covered through contributions from the participating members, and no financial burden had been placed on the Chamber. He stated that the directory serves as a modern version of the traditional Yellow Pages and was intended to promote the business community of Sialkot. While most business information was now available online, he said that the directory would act as an effective branding tool for Sialkot, its industry and the Chamber. He further informed that the directory would be distributed to approximately 150 Embassies in Pakistan and shared with Diplomatic Missions of Pakistan in foreign countries to strengthen business linkages. Instead of focusing primarily on Europe, he proposed targeting Central Asian, African, and other emerging markets, where there was greater potential for developing new trade opportunities. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad added that the Chamber had developed strong relations with foreign Embassies through regular interaction, exchange of correspondence, seasonal greetings, and official visits.

31. Sheikh Muhammad Shahid Inam inquired about the visa-related issues concerning participants of the ISPO Exhibition and asked whether the matter would be taken up with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Islamabad.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad replied that he had already written a letter to the Embassy regarding the matter. He further informed the House that he had also tried to approach the

Embassy through Mr. Ejaz Khokhar, who had good contacts with officials at the Embassy of the Netherlands, in an effort to facilitate resolution of the visa issues.

Sheikh Atiq-ur-Rehman requested Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad to take up the issue of visa validity with the Embassy of the Netherlands during the proposed meeting. He suggested that the Chamber should request the Embassy to issue long-term visas to genuine exporters and frequent business travelers, participating in international exhibitions.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad assured the House that the matter would be discussed with the Embassy.

Mr. Muhammad Bilal Khan pointed out that many frequent travelers, despite having a long history of business visits, were often issued short-term visas or even refused visas upon reapplying after the expiry of their previous visas. He observed that such applicants were frequently treated as if they were first-time applicants.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad recalled that during the previous ISPO and MEDICA Exhibitions, several members had faced similar visa-related difficulties with the Embassy. However, he said that the situation improved significantly following the visit of the German Ambassador to Sialkot, after which the Embassy adopted a more facilitative approach and granted visas to a larger number of applicants. He added that visas were issued even to applicants who had exported through alternative payment channels, such as Western Union, instead of the formal banking system through Form-E documentation, as well as, to some applicants holding blank passports. He remarked that such decisions largely depended on the policies and approach of the respective Ambassadors and Embassies.

32. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad informed the House that the President had attended a meeting with the State Minister for Finance Mr. Bilal Azhar Kayani, the previous day. He said that senior government officials were also present and described the meeting as very productive.

He further informed that upon returning to Gujrat, the President was invited to attend another meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan at 8:30 a.m. the next day. He noted that the President had travelled to Islamabad twice, within two days, in order to pursue matters relating to the business community. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad expressed optimism that substantial progress had been made regarding the Final Tax Regime (FTR). However, he stated that the Chamber would disclose the details only after receiving the government's decision in writing.

33. Mr. Sohail Masood informed that the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) authorities were also charging certain fees. He inquired whether the Secretariat had any information regarding the matter.

Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Asad informed that the late fee for filing returns had been increased.

34. Mr. Salman Sheikh presented the upgraded version of the Chamber's existing website to the House. He briefed the members on the improvements and amendments made to the website and compared the previous version with the upgraded one. He explained that the upgradation focused on enhancing the existing platform by introducing new features, improving the layout and navigation, updating content. The house appreciated the efforts to improve Website.

35. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad informed the House that all agenda items had been discussed and requested the President to share an update on his recent visit to Islamabad.

The President informed the House that he had attended a meeting with the Minister of State for Finance, Mr. Bilal Azhar Kayani, where the primary agenda was restoration of the Fixed Tax Regime (FTR) for exporters. He described the meeting as very positive and expressed optimism that the matter of FTR would be resolved.

The President further informed the House that another important issue discussed during the meeting related to the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS). He explained that under the previous practice, importers were required to submit post-dated cheques as security against the applicable customs duties on imported goods. However, this system had recently been replaced with bank guarantees or insurance guarantees, which imposed an additional financial burden on importers due to the associated costs.

Sharing his personal experience as an importer, the President stated that his own company had also been required to furnish bank or insurance guarantees under the new arrangement. He informed the House that the Chamber had strongly recommended restoring the earlier system of post-dated cheques in place of bank or insurance guarantees.

The President further shared that the government representatives acknowledged the concerns raised by the Chamber. During the discussion, customs officials initially believed that insurance guarantees were not being widely demanded; however, after the matter was clarified and supported with practical examples, they accepted that such guarantees were in fact being required. He expressed confidence that the authorities had agreed to review the policy and restore the previous post-dated cheque mechanism to facilitate the business community.

The President informed the House that the Finance Minister had assured the Chamber that another meeting on the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) would be convened next week with the relevant government officials to finalize the outstanding matters.

The President further informed that, while he was returning from Islamabad the previous evening, he received a call from the Finance Minister, who informed him that a meeting with the Prime Minister had been scheduled for 8:30 a.m. the next morning. The President attended the meeting as scheduled and held detailed discussions with the Prime Minister regarding the restoration of the Fixed Tax Regime (FTR) for exporters.

According to the President, the Prime Minister assured him that exporters would continue to pay tax at a fixed rate of 1.25%, which would be treated as the final tax liability. The Prime Minister acknowledged the Chamber's long-standing demand and stated that he was personally engaged in resolving the issue. However, he explained that due to commitments made under the IMF program, the government was unable to restore the FTR through fresh legislation.

The President further stated that the Prime Minister assured him that instructions would be issued to the Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue, Sialkot, and other relevant tax authorities that exporters paying the prescribed 1.25% final tax would not be subjected to routine audits. He added that if any audit became necessary, it would only be initiated after consultation with a Committee of the Chamber, and a similar mechanism would be implemented for exporters throughout Pakistan.

The President remarked that this had been one of the Chamber's principal demands over the past two years.

The President informed the House that the Ministers had also discussed the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) with the Prime Minister. He shared that the Ministers stated that the Government was removing the hurdles in the implementation of the scheme and that the post-dated cheque mechanism would be restored.

The President further stated that he had requested an extension of the EFS utilization period. He explained that the validity had initially been fixed at nine months and was later extended to eighteen months. However, he proposed that it should be increased to thirty-six months (three years) to better align with exporters' production and procurement cycles.

He expressed satisfaction that the Government had responded positively to these proposals. He further remarked that alongside the restoration of the Final Tax Regime (FTR) for exporters,

the proposed improvements to the EFS would be among the most significant achievements during his tenure as President of the Chamber.

The President stated that once the above-mentioned achievement regarding FTR was received from the Government in writing, they would be circulated among the members for their information.

The President stated that audit proceedings would likely be initiated only in the cases of companies engaged in both export and local business activities or those having other sources of local income. The audit would be done on local business. He further informed the House that such cases would be referred to the Audit Committee for further necessary action.

36. Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad presented the Yellow Pages directory to the President.

The President said that, unlike previous publications, the current publication did not include photographs of the sitting Office Bearers on the main page, which was a notable difference.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad explained that the directory had already been finalized and that the objective was to utilize it primarily as a promotional tool for international outreach. He informed the House that approximately Rs. 2 million had been collected from the members for Diary and Directory. He said that the printing cost of 1,000 copies was estimated at around Rs. 1.2 million. The remaining amount would be utilized to cover courier and distribution expenses, thereby avoiding any financial burden on the Chamber. He further informed that in the initial phase, the directories would be dispatched to Central Asian and African countries.

The President suggested that the distribution should be expanded globally.

The President further informed the House that representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently visited the Chamber and had specifically requested the Chamber to provide a comprehensive directory and catalogue containing members' details. He stated that such a publication would enable the Foreign Office to readily access information and effectively promote Sialkot's business community through Pakistan's diplomatic missions abroad.

Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad further informed the House that the Yellow Pages directory would also be integrated with the Chamber's website, enabling users to access the information digitally.

37. The President informed the House that an official meeting, led by Mr. Riaz Ud Din Sheikh, was held with Khawaja Muhammad Asif regarding the Sialkot Ring Road project. He shared that Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated that if additional funds were not allocated, the project might have to be closed.

On behalf of the Chamber, it was suggested that the project should not be discontinued. Instead, if required, the alignment or location should be revised and the work should continue by exploring all possible options to ensure the completion of the project.

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

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