

THE SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD ON MARCH 31, 2026

01. A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held on March 31, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. at Mini Meeting Room of the Sialkot Chamber.

02. Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, 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:

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| • Syed Ahtesham Mazhar | President |
| • Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad | Senior Vice President |
| • Mr. Salman Sheikh | Vice President |
| • Mr. Ikram Ul Haq | -Member- |
| • Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi | -do- |
| • Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik | -do- |
| • Mr. Aamer Mahmood | -do- |
| • Mr. Adnan Safdar | -Member- |
| • Mr. Arshad Jamil Chaudhry | -do- |
| • Mr. Bilal Ahmed Khan | -do- |
| • Mr. Haseeb Tahir | -do- |
| • Mr. Hassan Akbar | -do- |
| • Mr. Jawad Khalid | -do- |
| • Mr. Muhammad Abid | -do- |
| • Sh. Muhammad Shahid Inam | -do- |
| • Mr. Sohail Masood | -do- |

05. **Leave of Absence**

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| • Mr. Omer Khalid | -do- |
| • Mr. Khurram Javaid Sethi | -do- |
| • Ms. Kinza Ijaz | -do- |
| • Mr. Mehtab Maqsood | -do- |
| • Ms. Syeda Ayesha Wadood | -do- |

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

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| • Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Asad | -do- |
| • Sheikh Atique-ur-Rehman | -do- |

07. **Special Invitees**

- Malik Naseer Ahmed, Chairman Departmental Committee on Accounts

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

- Father of Ms. Saba Asghar Ali, Deputy Commissioner
- Father of Ms. Beelam Ramzan, Collector of Customs
- Mother in Law of (Khala Saas) of Mr. Ejaz Ghauree
- Sister in Law (Bhabhi Maa) of Mian Muhammad Khalil
- Mirza Saeed Ahmed Barlas M/s. Pak German and Vital
- Mr. Ateeque Anjum Dar M/s. Dar Melamine Ware
- Wife of Mr. Qayyum Mehboob Rand of M/s. Pak Alam Industry

09. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on February 28, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Adnan Safdar asked about the status of approval from DRAP for clearance of surgical shipments, as discussed in the last EC meeting. The President informed that Mr. Murad Arshad had worked on this matter and requested him to brief the members. Mr. Murad Arshad shared that DRAP had given temporary relaxation. However, there were discussions to include the surgical sector under DRAP laws, which were mainly for pharmaceuticals and did not suit the surgical industry. He suggested that the sector should propose its own recommendations before any such rules were imposed. Mr. Umair Nisar informed that a meeting Surgical Council would be held next week at the SIMAP office to discuss this issue. Mr. Ikram-ul-Haq explained that earlier the surgical sector was considered under DRAP, but the SIMAP opposed it as the laws were not suitable. Now, the Government had established the National Compliance Centre (NCC), where a draft for the surgical sector had been submitted but was still under review. He emphasized that joining DRAP was not in the interest of the surgical sector. Mr. Salman Sheikh highlighted that syringe needles fall under this category and should be included through proper HS codes. The President shared that upon request and consistent follow-up, the Government had enhanced the utilization period for import shipments under the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) from 9 months to 18 months. He stated that this had been a major issue for the Sialkot export industry. He further informed that it had been requested an extension of up to three years; however, the Government approved an extension of 18 months. The House appreciated this development.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Muhammad Murad Arshad, Mr. Salman Sheikh, Mr. Adnan Safdar and Mr. Umair Nisar.
Approval	Approved.

10. Point discussed.	Approval of Statement of Accounts for the month of February 2026.
<u>Discussion.</u> Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed requested the Members to review the minutes and raise any queries regarding expenditures, if observed. Mr. Sohail Masood stated that there was no questionable item noted in the accounts. Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed, however, pointed out that the expenses under the heads of entertainment and functions had increased as compared to the previous month. Upon detailed discussion, it was clarified that the increase was due to a function organized in honor of top exporters, wherein a dinner was arranged for approximately 300 members. The President requested Malik Naseer Ahmed to share, if any additional expenditures had been identified. Malik Naseer Ahmed responded that no other extra expenses were found, except for the purchase of chairs for the prayer area amounting to approximately Rs. 27,000	

	each, which were physically verified. He further informed the House that the accounts had been thoroughly reviewed by the Committee and were found to be 100% satisfactory.
Participants	The President, Malik Naseer Ahmed and Mr. Sohail Masood.
Approval	Approved.

11. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with the Collector of Customs, Sialkot held on March 03, 2026.
<u>Discussion</u>	
The President stated that it was a courtesy visit to the Collectorate. He informed that a Committee had been formed in the meeting, which would meet on a monthly basis. One meeting would be held at the Chamber, while the next would be held at the Collectorate office to discuss customs-related issues. The Committee would comprise four members, two from the Chamber and two from the senior staff of the Collectorate. The President further shared that several points were discussed, particularly the issue of release of import containers. He explained that if containers were not released immediately due to incomplete documentation, heavy demurrage charges in dollars had to be paid. He informed that the Committee Chairman, Mr. Tariq Hussain proposed that such containers should be de-stuffed, allowing members to complete the required documentation afterwards. He added that completing documentation usually took several days, resulting in significant demurrage charges before release of the containers, and there were many such cases. The Collectorate suggested that the Chamber should formally write to Custom Operations, in this regard, which had already been done. Mr. Sohail Masood mentioned that a similar de-stuffing practice was followed in Karachi. The President clarified that in Karachi, shipments were released after customs clearance, whereas the Sialkot Chamber had requested that de-stuffing be allowed prior to the completion of deficient documents.	
Participants	The President and Mr. Sohail Masood.
Approval	Approved.

12. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting with Mr. Mubeen Illahi, Managing Director, Punjab Small Industries Corporation, held on March 04, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u>	
The President informed that Mr. Mubeen Illahi, Managing Director, Punjab Small Industries Corporation, visited the Chamber and issues related to PSIC were discussed in detail. He stated that PSIC had launched a loan scheme of up to Rs. 50 (M) at 0% markup for exporters and industrialists to enhance their exports and expand their production lines. He explained that the purpose of the visit of MD PSIC was to facilitate the exporters by creating awareness about these financing opportunities. The Bank of Punjab provided approvals under this scheme and charged service fees at the rate of 3%. The President further informed that standees regarding the scheme had been displayed at the Chamber premises and the same had also been circulated among the members. Representatives from the Bank of Punjab also visited the Chamber to	

guide members and facilitate them in availing these facilities.

He added that a number of members had availed the scheme, particularly those establishing tanneries in the Sialkot Tannery Zone.

Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed informed that more than 20 members in the Tannery Zone had obtained loans under this scheme.

Mr. Ikram Ul further shared that the 3% service charges were deducted by the Bank of Punjab at the time of loan approval, and the remaining amount was required to be repaid within five years in monthly installments.

Participants	The President, Mr. Ikram Ul Haq and Mr. Malik Naseer Ahmed.
Approval	Approved.

13. Point discussed.	Approval of Report of meeting with Mr. Khurram Shafique, Additional Director General (R&D) TEVTA Secretariat Lahore, held on March 11, 2026.
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<u>Discussion:</u>	
Mr. Salman Sheikh VP informed the House that Mr. Khurram Shafique, Additional Director General (R&D), TEVTA Secretariat Lahore, visited the Chamber. The purpose of his visit was to discuss the development of a 3-months training course for Safety Officers, who, upon completion of the training, would be appointed within factory premises. He further apprised the members that the Government had enacted legislation making it mandatory for every factory to have, at least, one Safety Officer, in order to ensure compliance with workplace safety standards. During the discussion, TEVTA sought input from the Chamber regarding the course structure and its practical implementation. Mr. Salman Sheikh said that he highlighted that cottage and small-scale industries would face difficulties in hiring a dedicated Safety Officer, whereas larger industrial units already had appointed trained personnel who could be further capacitated through specialized training. In this regard, he proposed a cost-effective solution by suggesting the integration of the roles of Electrician and Safety Officer. He explained that since most industrial units already employed electricians, these individuals could be provided with additional training through the proposed 3-month course, enabling them to perform dual responsibilities. This approach, he emphasized, would reduce the financial burden on smaller industries while ensuring compliance with safety regulations, and at the same time enhance the overall safety standards within industrial premises. The President emphasized the need for immediate attention towards safety measures within factory premises, highlighting that a number of unfortunate incidents had occurred in the recent past. He stressed that preventive steps must be taken to avoid such occurrences in the future. Mr. Jawad Khalid informed the House that TEVTA had initially planned a six-month training course for Safety Officers; however, it was suggested to reduce the duration to three months by focusing on essential and basic knowledge. Mr. Sohail Masood proposed that such training programs should be conducted within factory premises to ensure practical exposure and better understanding.	

The President sought input from Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik regarding awareness initiatives, safety measures, and fire incidents in factories.

Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik suggested that awareness seminars should be organized on a regular basis. He shared that several seminars were conducted during his tenure to promote safety awareness. He further pointed out that even the Chamber building itself was not fully equipped with required safety measures and should be upgraded accordingly. He informed that a comprehensive proposal had been prepared by Rescue 1122, amounting to approximately Rs. 2.2 million.

Upon inquiry by the President regarding the details of the Rescue 1122 proposal, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik explained that it included complete piping and installation of safety systems. He also added that safety compliance measures were part of social compliance requirements.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq observed that government institutions typically became active only after major incidents, following which strict actions and penalties were imposed. He noted that affected members then approach the Chamber for support. Referring to his tenure, he mentioned that he had prepared and circulated a one-page document summarizing the requirements under the Punjab Safety Act 2012, which proved useful for awareness. He emphasized the importance of re-circulating such material. Furthermore, he strongly recommended that all industrial units in Punjab or Pakistan should appoint trained Safety Officers who could establish systems and conduct internal training sessions. He stated that the proposed three-month training would only be effective if such officers were actually appointed.

The President inquired from Mr. Jawad Khalid whether any seminar had been planned.

Mr. Jawad Khalid responded that a seminar was planned for the following month. He also stated that the one-page document would be updated in consultation with TEVTA and circulated among members.

The President advised that representatives from factories where unfortunate fire incidents had occurred should be invited to share their experiences, as such firsthand information sharing would have a stronger impact on participants. He further suggested that a documentary be prepared highlighting incidents and subsequent corrective measures, which could be presented during seminars.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq proposed assigning the task to quality assurance consultants registered with the Chamber to prepare a comprehensive booklet on safety measures and implementation plans covering the five major industrial sectors.

The President assured full support to Mr. Jawad Khalid for all proposals and initiatives undertaken, in this regard.

Mr. Salman Sheikh raised the importance of addressing insurance claims following industrial incidents and suggested that this aspect should also be included in awareness and training programs.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq shared the case of M/s Cobija Enterprises, where a fire incident occurred but the insurance claim was initially rejected by the insurance company. He informed that the matter was pursued, at higher levels, leading to the blacklisting of the concerned insurance company. He suggested compiling such cases and submitting them to the relevant ministry for review.

The President informed the House that the office of the Insurance Ombudsman had been established to address such complaints. He shared his personal experience

where a theft incident occurred at his factory and his insurance claim was initially rejected. However, after referring the matter to the Insurance Ombudsman, he successfully received the claim.	
Participants	The President, Mr. Salman Sheikh, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik and Mr. Ikram ul Haq.
Approval	Approved.

14. Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Project Committee on Sialkot Industrial Zone held on March 12, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u> The President stated that a Committee had been constituted to deliberate on the establishment of the proposed Industrial Zone. A meeting of the said Committee was held in his office, wherein various potential sites were discussed, including land within the Revenue Department (RN), government-owned land measuring approximately 14 acres, and other available options. He further informed that two sites located on Aimanabad Road, comprising a significantly larger area of approximately one thousand acres, were also considered. During the deliberations, different views emerged among the committee members. Some members were of the opinion that a new site should be proposed to the Government for the development of the Industrial Zone, while others emphasized focusing on the previously identified location. The President added that the matter remained under discussion within the Committee, and further progress would be made after reaching a consensus. He expressed optimism that the project would be taken forward in due course. However, at present, the project remained at a standstill.	
Participants	The President.
Approval	Approved.

15 Point discussed.	Approval of minutes of meeting of the Departmental Committee on Membership/Bye-Laws scheduled to be held on March 27, 2026.
<u>Discussion:</u> Mr. Salman Sheikh said that 190 Associate and 11 Corporate members were granted membership during this month.	
Participants	Mr. Salman Sheikh.
Approval	Approved.

Any Other Point

16. The President asked Mr. Hassan Akbar which insurance company was best for vehicle insurance.

Mr. Hassan Akbar replied that Adamjee Insurance Company Limited was the top company due to its strong corporate culture.

17. The President requested Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik to update the House regarding the renovation work of the Chamber.

Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik informed that the renovation work of Sheikh Muhammad Shafi Hall would be completed by April 8, 2026. He further stated that he had visited along with Mr. Riaz-ud-Din Sheikh on Sunday.

Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik proposed that the inauguration of the Hall be held on April 11, 2026, which was agreed upon by the members.

Mr. Sohail Masood shared that he had also visited the Hall and observed that the corners of the tiles were quite sharp. He suggested that these should be rounded off to prevent any potential injuries.

The President directed that, after the completion of the Hall, the Library should be expanded by incorporating the adjacent open area, as proposed by the Vice President.

18. Mr. Ikram Ul Haq discussed the current status of EPZ and shared that during an informal conversation after a recent meeting, concerns were raised regarding declining confidence in the project. He informed the House that he had received a call from Mr. Shafay Hussain, Minister of Industries Punjab who expressed serious concern that in the upcoming Board of Investment meeting, the EPZ matter might once again move towards cancellation of plots. It was highlighted that, although cancellation had previously seemed inevitable, significant efforts were made, particularly upon the request of the Sialkot Chamber and through the dedicated work of Mr. Rana Asghar Ali to reverse the situation. As a result, plot cancellations were withdrawn, penalties were restored under relaxed terms, the mandatory deposit of Rs. 300,000 was made refundable upon submission of an affidavit and commencement of construction, and an extended deadline up to 2028 was granted. Despite these substantial facilitative measures, it was noted with concern that even this reduced and refundable amount had not been deposited by many allottees. Mr. Ikram emphasized that the Chamber must stress upon its members that these concessions were secured for their benefit, and lack of response may jeopardize all prior efforts. He warned that the matter might again be taken up for cancellation at the PSIC Board level. He further informed that he had asked Mr. Shafay Hussain that he would contact with the sitting President.

Mr. Ikram Ul Haq stated that it was essential to ensure that the Sialkot Export Processing Zone (SEpz) project was moved towards the right direction, as its current condition was a matter of serious concern and "a stain on Chamber's reputation." He remarked that the non-development of the EPZ had negatively affected the government's confidence in similar projects, resulting in reduced support for other proposals as well.

He recommended that all EPZ allottees/plot holders should be called for a meeting at one place, preferably over tea, to directly communicate with them. In this meeting, the Chamber should clearly remind them that the Sialkot Chamber extended significant support by facilitating the project, restoring cancelled plots, abolishing penalties, and granting an extension up to 2028, with a clear condition that no further extension would be granted and non-compliant plots would be cancelled thereafter.

He further proposed that allottees who were not willing to establish factories should be officially identified and declared. In this regard, he suggested the formulation of a proper exit policy, similar to the one implemented in the Sialkot Tannery Zone project. He also noted that while one possible option could be to convert the EPZ into a Sialkot Industrial Zone.

The President replied that it was not feasible, as several companies had already made substantial investments and established factories there, and such a conversion would be against their interests.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi inquired whether, in case any investor or alternate buyer was available for the plot, it could be surrendered or cancelled.

The President responded that the plot could not be sold to any third party, and in case of surrender, it would revert to PSIC at the same rate at which it was originally purchased.

Mr. Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi further asked, if the plot was auctioned again or re-sold, buyers would be available under the same terms and conditions.

The President confirmed that suitable customers were available for the same.

19. The President stated that, in order to promote business growth and gain exposure to the latest ideas and practices, he intended to visit the R&D facilities of major industrial units in Sialkot, including leading organizations such as Forward Sports and prominent medical device manufacturers. He further added that he would share the proposed visit plan among EC members to invite them to accompany him during the visit. The House agreed to the President's proposal.

He also stated that a visit to the Sialkot Tannery Zone, including its treatment plant developed with the financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank, would be arranged to review its operations and progress.

20. Mr. Salman Sheikh emphasized the urgent need for adopting digital transformation to modernize business practices. He highlighted that despite steady export growth over the past four years and the registration of around 10,000 new entrepreneurs annually, traditional approaches have limited overall expansion. He proposed a collective initiative to integrate digital transformation across the business community, stating that it could potentially double exports and create new opportunities for entrepreneurs. He stressed that this should not be an individual effort but a shared project supported by the entire Executive body and Chamber members.

He further suggested presenting a structured roadmap in the next Executive Committee meeting, outlining current achievements, gaps, and future opportunities in digital development.

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

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