# RESCENDO TOASTMASTERS PAKISTAN NEWS AND EVENTS



**DISTRICT 122P Public Relations Team** 



VOLUME 5 ISSUE 10 SOLSTICE 2025

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TM Iqra Arshad **Public Relations** Manager, D122P 2025-26



TM Akash Kumar **Public Relations** Manager, D122P 2024-25

### Going out in style!

PAKTAC. Beats of Brilliance. District contests.

There has been a whirlwind of events, achievements and awards over the past few weeks.

During the past two years, we have covered, felt, breathed, LIVED every heartbeat of our beautiful Toastmasters community. There have been triumphs, setbacks, elation, euphoria, and, occasionally, depths of despair so all encompassing that it has been hard to imagine a single spark of light.

And it comes. It always comes. From where one least expects it, hope springs anew. All it needs is holding on, patience, a jihad against fatalism and pessimism, a crusade against gloom. All it needs is showing up, speaking up, digging one's feet and vowing to fight another day.

We witnessed it again and again. Inflation, war, uncertainty, and our own limitations combined to haunt our ambitions. Yet we showed up every day, every hour, every week. And today, we stand triumphant as a Smedley Distinguished District, raising our flag once again!

No failure is permanent, and neither is any success. We must continue to work, and continue to seek inspiration, guidance and virtue.

#### We must KEEP SHOWING UP.

In that spirit, I sincerely thank our outgoing PRM TM Akash Kumar, for his sterling stewardship, to my Crescendo team for their unwavering support, and to the District leadership for their unrelenting encouragement and generosity.

Years end, teams disband, so must we. However, the show must go on, so here is handing over to our incoming PRM, TM Iqra Arshad, to the Editor and team, and to years and years of continued success!

**The Crescendo Team** 









With every edition of Crescendo, we built more than a TM Imran Rana newsletter — we

built connection,

creativity, and

community. I'm

grateful for the

opportunity to

contribute to this

under the Editor's

remarkable vision

that brought it all

together. This final

crescendo to a year

of voices that truly

issue is a fitting

deserved to be

newsletter that

just like its name.

TM Umna Salman

always aimed to rise,

heard — a

journey, alongside a

passionate team and



TM Naureen Fatima



TM Umna Salman



**DTM Erum Rizvi** 



**EDITOR** DTM Talha bin Hamid



















# message.

#### Leading with Love, **Leaving with Pride**

All praise to Almighty, who granted us the courage to dream, the strength to act, and the blessing of walking this incredible journey together. As my term as your District Director comes to a close on 30 June, I pause with a heart overflowing with gratitude. Alhamdulillah! This journey has been nothing short of transformational, fueled by passion, driven by purpose, and uplifted by every one of you.



Yes, the final numbers are exhilarating. But beyond those numbers is the true story, the story of people. Leaders who led with heart. Members who stood by with unwavering belief in our mission. To each one of you: thank you.

Your commitment, resilience, and unity made this success not only possible but beautiful. From the depths of my heart, I LOVE YOU!

And now, I am overjoyed to share that we have achieved the Smedley Distinguished District Award — the highest recognition in Toastmasters International. Out of 130 districts across the world, only 7 have earned this honor, and District 122P is proudly one of them. This is a tribute to your excellence, discipline, and determination.

We concluded the year with celebrations full of spirit — Beats of Brilliance in Islamabad and Karachi. These weren't mere events. They were echoes of excellence and seeds of the future.

And what a perfect finale — WWF Toastmasters became our 50th club, achieving a historic half-century. What was once a distant dream now stands as a living legacy.

A thunderous round of applause for our 3 Division Directors, 5 Area Directors, and 23 Club Executive Committees for achieving Distinguished status. And a heartfelt thank you to our Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Immediate Past District Director, District Managers and the entire District Council for your unwavering support and relentless efforts.

In District 122P, every member matters, every club shines, every leader uplifts, and every smile brings us closer. We are more than a district. We are a family.

Let us celebrate with humility, lead with kindness, and carry forward the light we've kindled together. Our mission doesn't end here. Our journey continues.

The best is yet to come. With love and pride Zaid Kaliya, DTM, FCA **Immediate Past District Director** District Director 2024–2025 District 122P | Pakistan







# message.



Dear Toastmasters of District 122P,

I stand in deep admiration of the passion, perseverance, and performance you've demonstrated across every corner of our district. From the very first Club Officer Training (COT) to the final round of speech contests — and culminating in the remarkable achievement of becoming a **Smedley Distinguished District** across all categories — you've turned every challenge into a stepping stone, and every dream into a reality.

Whether as a club officer, mentor, trainer, or enthusiastic member, your unwavering commitment to excellence in communication and leadership has been truly inspiring.

A major highlight this year from the Program Quality Desk was that **23 clubs achieved Distinguished status** by year-end — a phenomenal feat made possible by the dedication of our members and the tireless efforts of club executive committees. I extend my sincere appreciation to our District Director for 2024–25, **DTM Zaid Kaliya**, whose visionary leadership and consistent engagement with club leaders and the district executive committee kept the district energized and focused on excellence. This year, the Program Quality team organized **over 24 impactful events** — the highest in District 122's history. These included two house-packed COTs, multiple contest-related trainings, and Speaker Bureau sessions. Special thanks to our remarkable **TLI Chair, DTM Sarfaraz Nazir**, and **PR-PQD, TM Iqra Arshad**, whose dedication made these events valuable and memorable learning opportunities.

Seasoned Toastmasters and emerging potential leaders were given opportunities to serve as trainers and role holders in events, allowing them to polish their skills while providing valuable learning experiences to our members.

The highlight of the year was the **Annual Conference 2025**, held in Lahore under the theme *Breaking Boundaries*. Spanning over 8 hours — the longest event in our district's history — it featured our **first-ever in-person contest finals**. Contestants, judges, and members traveled to Lahore, contributing to an electric atmosphere filled with energy, passion, and high-caliber speeches. The performances were not only captivating but also challenged our judges with their excellence.

Two key initiatives — the **Speakers Bureau** and the **YouTube Learning Library** — hold great promise for continued development and should remain focal points in the coming year. Our **Gamification Chair, TM Imran Rana**, played a pivotal role in keeping clubs engaged and driving continuous improvement in meeting quality.

But beyond the numbers and milestones, it's the **spirit of our members** that made this year truly memorable. You created safe spaces for growth, empowered voices that once trembled, and built bonds that will outlast any title or term. To every Toastmaster who led, learned, and lifted others — thank you. This *Crescendo* is not an end, but a powerful pause before our next symphony begins.

Let's carry this momentum forward — with purpose, passion, and pride. With gratitude and admiration,

Syed Azam Ali, DTM, FCA *Your Program Quality Director, 2024–25* 







Syed Azam Ali, DTM

District Director,

D122P 2025-26

message.



2025-26

#### **The Glorious Cycle**

The phrase "the ending of a beginning or the beginning of an end" highlights the cyclical nature of life and events, suggesting that the conclusion of one phase or process often serves as the starting point for another. It emphasizes that endings and beginnings are not isolated events, but rather interconnected parts of a continuous cycle. Our life as toastmasters is no different.

We are elected to various positions or volunteer for various roles at different levels, make various plans, become part of the various teams, make new connections, face plethora of hurdles, overcome obstacles, leave some issues unaddressed as our term reaches the end. The transition to a new role marks another iteration of this loop. This cyclic nature is inevitable. As toastmasters and leaders, I urge you to take out the time to do a smooth transition. Hold a meeting with your successor in whatever way possible and pass on the baton.

Do not leave it in the middle. Handing over the resources to your successor and sharing lessons learnt and opportunities that were about to mature in terms of membership and club growth must not be left unattended. We are all ONE TEAM and you must make sure that while the roles switch and leadership change, the goal of the district is the same; to build new club and to support all clubs in achieving excellence. In addition, as individual toastmasters, even if we are not part of any leadership position, we should still play our part to contribute to the mission of the organization; We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.

As said by our founder Dr Ralph C Smedley,

"Toastmasters are educators, whether they realize it or not, and Toastmasters is more than a club---it's an education."

Lets continue to serve the members and the community and grow together.

Ali Amjad, DTM Your Club Growth Director, 2024–25

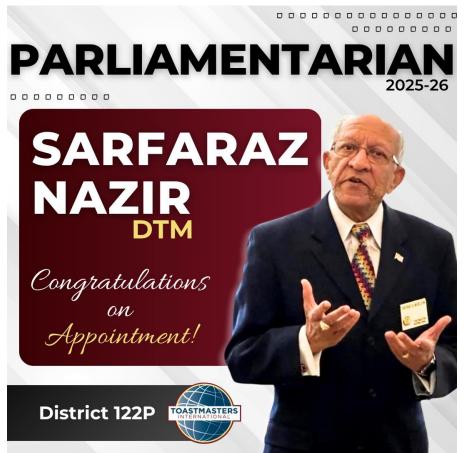
















The new Toastmasters years heralds a change of guard.

We extend our heartfelt welcome to the new leaders and remain hopeful that they will uphold the Toastmasters core values and continue our District's path of growth and glory.









With the theme "Breaking Boundaries", the day brought together Power Talks, Speech Contests, Panel Discussions, and full-on networking energy.

We didn't just break boundaries — we learned, connected, and grew together.

A heartfelt thank you to Crescent Model Higher School Shadman ,Lahore for being our incredible venue partner, and to all the dedicated teams who turned this event into an unforgettable success!

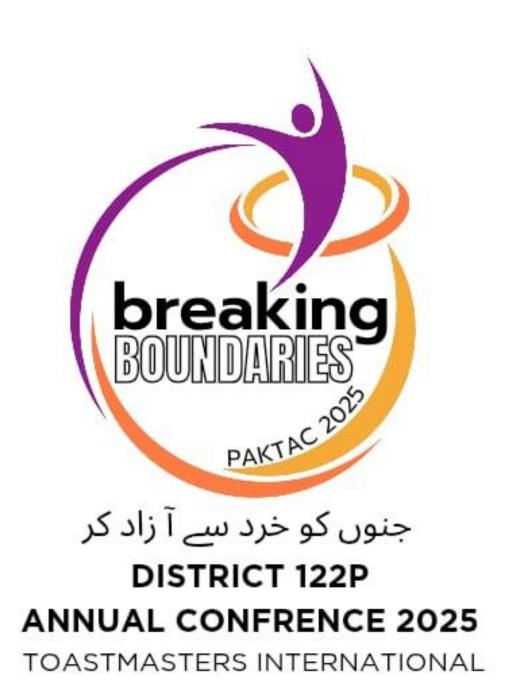












Without question, the most exciting part of PAKTAC 2025 were the annual speech contests.

Two contests took place in person at Lahore, while Urdu Speech Contest was held online.

The in-person contests featured a live audience, an immediate spark of excitement and a nexus between speaker and audience that was palpable.

The online Urdu contest, on the other hand, brought Toastmasters from around the country and beyond on one platform, all witnessing the spellbinding oratory unfold in a language that remains our first love.

In short, "the best of both worlds!"





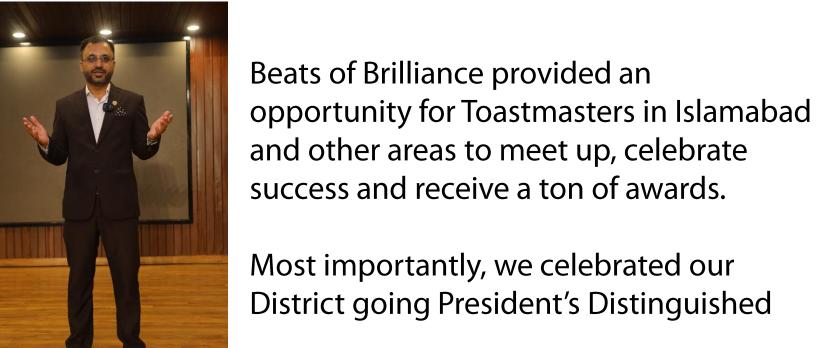














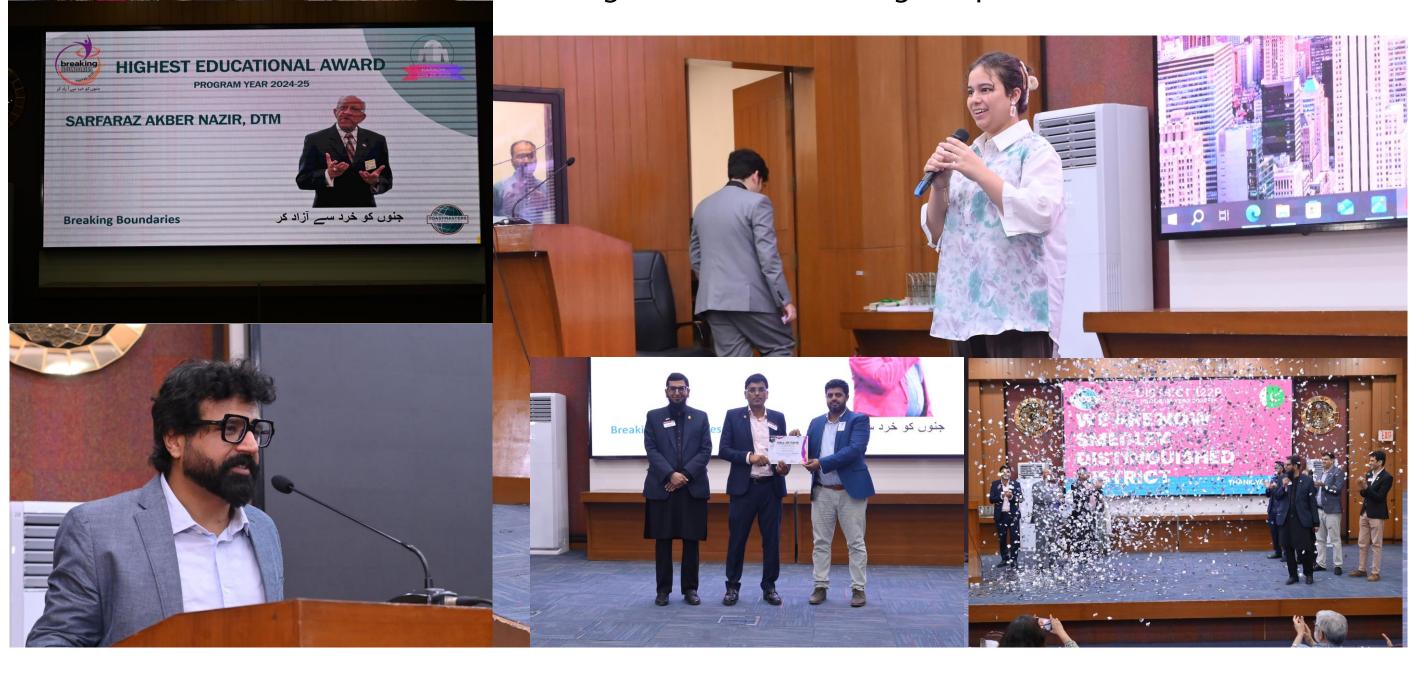






Beats of Brilliance provided an opportunity for Toastmasters in Karachi and other areas to meet up, celebrate success and receive a ton of awards.

The event became historic as we all witnessed the announcement of our District achieving Smedley Distinguished Award, the highest possible!





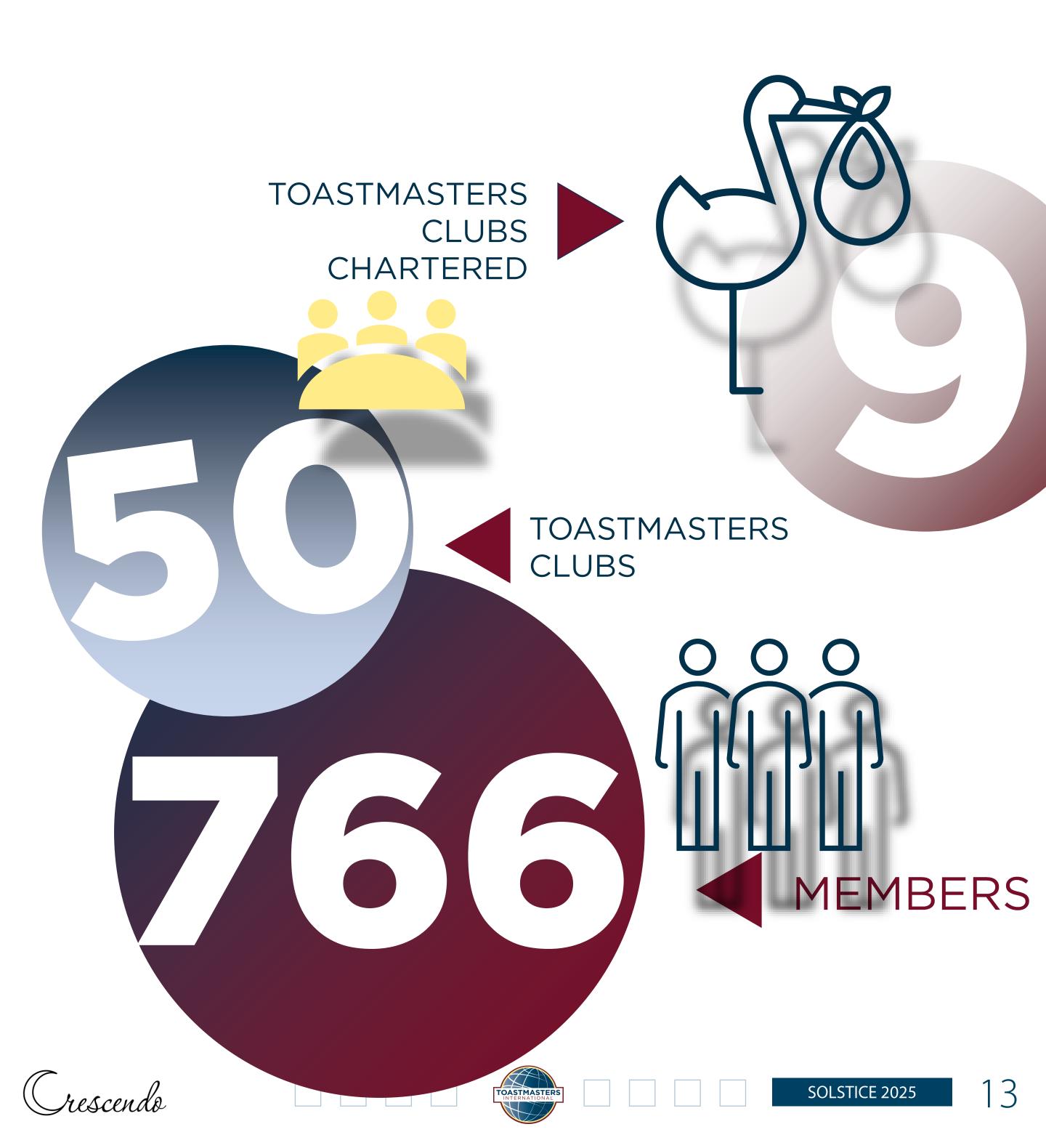


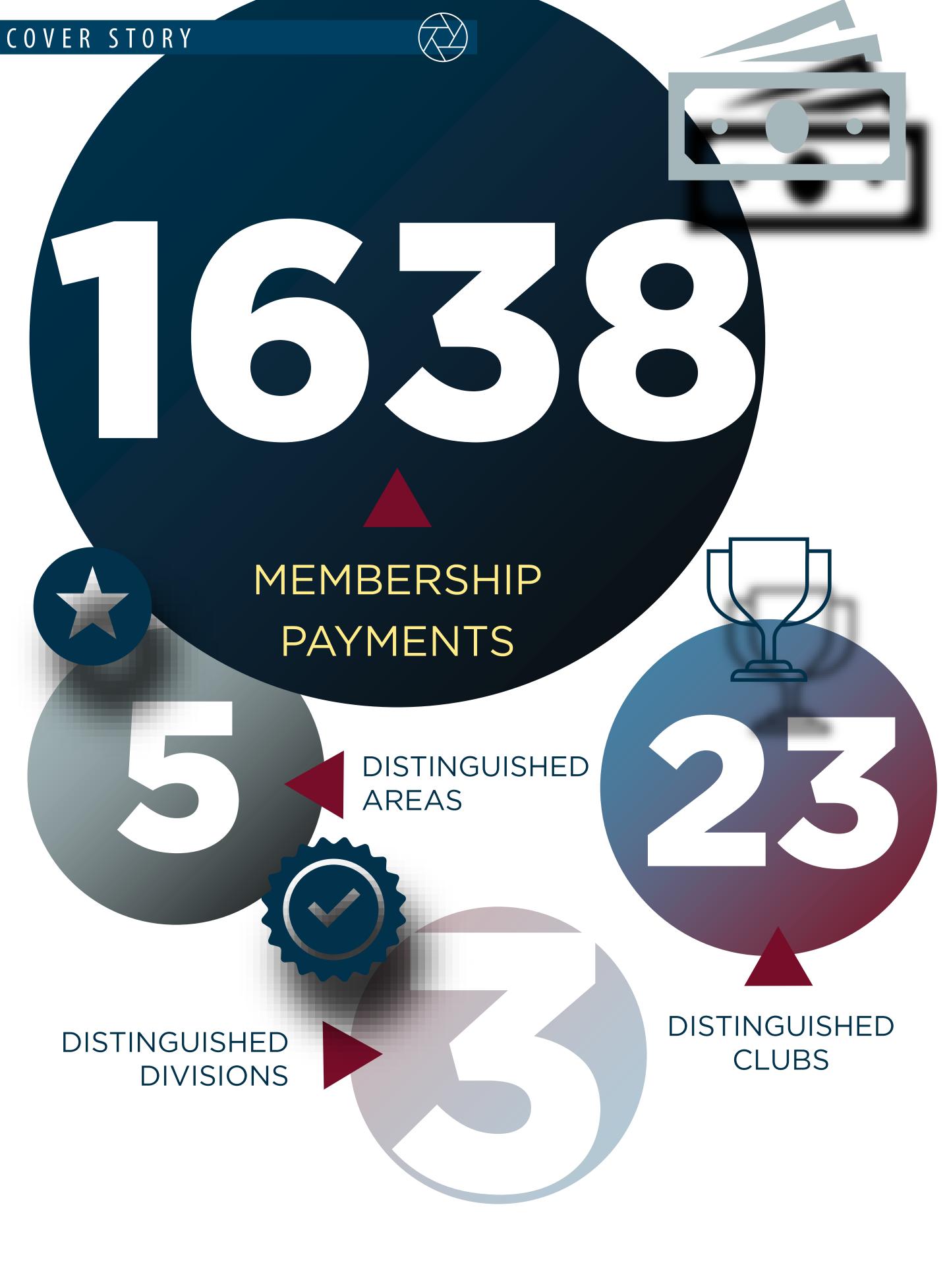


# NUMBERS SPEAK

These are just a few numbers that capture our journey to a SMEDLEY DISTINGUISHED AWARD for 2024-25.

Not captured: the 24/7 hard work, sleepless nights, meetings, frantic phone calls, and an unshakeable faith galvanized by the IPDD's motto: "SMEDLEY OR NOTHING"











Toastmasters Program found a new home with one of the country's largest insurers, EFU LIFE. The spectacular launch meeting was arranged by members of Karachi Toastmasters Club, and featured enthusiastic participation from eager participants from EFU Life.

















## TM Samreen Mukhtar

National Champion of Public Speaking, D122P, 2024-25



Interviewer:
Talha bin Hamid, DTM





## How did you come up with your speech? What was the inspiration?

Whenever I'd reflect on the trip and all that happened, one thing always stood out — the way everyone around me supported me when things weren't going well for me. It made me realize that small acts of kindness often go unnoticed in the moment, but they can make a huge difference in someone else's life. That realization stayed with me. The whole idea of kindness — simple, quiet, and powerful — really spoke to me. And I knew I wanted to share it.



# "We go further together" or "too many cooks spoil the broth" - which approach towards speech coaching and consultation is right for you?

Seeking feedback during speech preparation can be incredibly enriching. Suggestions from others often bring fresh insights and help refine ideas — as long as the speaker stays clear about the true soul of the speech and remains anchored to its core message.

One effective strategy is to consult a mix of familiar and unfamiliar voices. I reached out to Toastmasters who didn't know me as a speaker, so I could receive unfiltered, unbiased perspectives that cut through assumptions.

Ultimately, the best approach is to listen openly — but only apply the feedback that sits right with you.













## What are the three most valuable things you have derived from your Toastmasters journey so far?

One of the most valuable things I've gained is a deep sense of togetherness and service. In Toastmasters, people step up to help, guide, and support — not because they're obligated to, but because they want to build the community. The fact that it's all voluntary makes their time and effort even more meaningful. This is something we should keep reminding ourselves — the true spirit of Toastmasters lies in this culture of togetherness and selfless support. Every bit of help we receive holds value, and the best way to honor it is by paying it forward.



#### How do you come up with speech ideas?

Stories are all around us, just waiting to be told. As Krishan Chander once said, "Five hundred million people means five hundred million different stories."

I try to build my speeches around ideas that resonate with me — thoughts or experiences that feel authentic and worth sharing. If something rings true to me, chances are it might touch someone else too. That's where I begin.

#### Contests: needless tension or a great tool of personal development?

The tension is real — lol! But I believe contests put you on a fast track to learning. They compress the experience, push you out of your comfort zone, and challenge you to grow quickly. Plus, you get to witness some of the best speakers from across the country — and there's so much to take in just by watching that level of talent on display. It's intense, yes, but also rewarding.

## Your closing remarks to aspiring speakers?

Keep showing up and don't be afraid to be vulnerable — your words might be the reason someone else finds the courage to step onto the stage. Seek connection, not perfection, and trust that your story is enough.













In conversation with

### TM Irfan Yousaf Qureshi

Winner, Tall Tales Speech Contest, D122P, 2024-25







# How did you come up with your speech? How is Tall Tales different from other speeches, and what additional effort did it take to draft it?

I came up with the idea for my Tall Tale just three months into my Toastmasters journey. The inspiration struck from an Urdu joke that was close to my heart. It involved a powerful dialogue between a teacher and a student — a conversation about belief, direction, and the journey of learning. Tall Tales is unique because it doesn't just begin with words — it begins in the mind and then breaks all boundaries of logic and limitation. It offers a rare creative freedom where you can exaggerate, dramatize, and explore the wildest corners of imagination — all while still delivering a message. Writing it took extra effort in structuring the story, crafting vivid imagery, and practicing delivery with theatrical expression. It's public speaking pushed to its most extreme artistic form.



# "We go further together" or "Too many cooks spoil the broth" – which approach toward speech coaching and consultation is right for you?

For me, it's always "We go further together." I believe in the principle: "A kingmaker is better than a king." Collaboration is powerful. One perspective, one honest suggestion, or one new angle can transform an average speech into a masterpiece. When the intent is growth, collective input becomes a blessing, not a burden.









## What are the three most valuable things you've gained from your Toastmasters journey so far?

A deeper meeting with myself — discovering my voice, my purpose, and my strengths. Clarity about the meaning of life — through stories, reflection, and leadership. The satisfaction of lifting others — empowering fellow members, mentoring, and watching transformation happen in real time.



#### How do you come up with speech ideas?

I begin with an emotion — something I genuinely feel or believe in. Then I look for a fresh angle or a story that embodies that emotion. I ask myself, "Can this idea touch hearts, inspire minds, or change perspectives?" If the answer is yes, I pursue it.



#### Contests: needless tension or a great tool of personal development?

Contests, in my view, are a powerful engine of personal growth. They challenge us to stretch our limits, to prepare with discipline, and to perform under pressure. Yes, they bring tension — but it's that very pressure that shapes excellence. Just like a diamond is formed under intense heat, a champion speaker is forged through focused effort and courage.



## Your closing remarks to aspiring speakers?

Believe in your identity. You are YOU — and that is your greatest strength. Keep showing up. Keep trying. And don't fear failure — because every fall is a step forward. Fail forward. Speak with purpose. And always, always speak from the soul.









In conversation with

## Talha bin Hamd, DTM

Winner, Urdu Speech Contest, D122P, 2024-25

# "MABROOK!"

How an insipid greeting led to a championship-wining speech









#### What does winning the national Urdu speech contest mean to you?

It still feels surreal. With so many talented speakers, especially in Urdu, I didn't expect to win. I entered almost by accident when my club needed a contestant. But once in, I realized the responsibility. The contest helped me rediscover the beauty and flow of the Urdu language and adapt Urdu oratory to the standard Toastmasters style delivery.



#### What guided your preparation and mindset?

I wanted my speech to be a heartfelt story without tragedy or emotional manipulation. I followed the Toastmasters speech ballot carefully and stayed authentic. I knew judges might expect poetry or heavy sermons, but I focused on message over theatrics. Observing the preparation and trajectory of fellow finalist DTM Sarfaraz Nazir, and constant nagging by my speech coach, TM Imran Rana, also pushed me to keep refining and elevating my speech.



#### What inspired your speech?

It stemmed from a real moment: I received my DTM award, shared the news with a close friend, and that friend replied only "Mabrook." That flat, minimal response triggered deep reflection. I connected it to a childhood memory of Pakistan's 1992 World Cup win being reported blandly by the local press. The core message? Our emotional investment in others' moments matters deeply and it needs to be conveyed; a few words can make or break a heart.



#### What was your preparation process like?

I wrote, revised, and rehearsed meticulously. Practicing in front of my wife for the first time was a milestone and an even scarier prospect than actually going on the stage!. I focused on delivery details i.e gestures, timing, expression. One area that I still struggle with is vocal variety, and I earmarked specific parts of the speech for its display.

The conclusion was the toughest part I kept tweaking it till it felt right. – till the very last day!



#### What challenges did you face and how did Toastmasters help?

The biggest fear wasn't losing but failing to make an impact.

Competing online brought setup concerns, but Toastmasters taught me to focus on clarity and delivery rather than background and visuals. I put my faith in the message and learned to stop obsessing over technical perfection (no easy feat); I hoped that the audiences remember the content with the visuals and the medium acting as tools. .



#### **Advice for aspiring Urdu contestants?**

Read good Urdu novels, columns, digests. Write your speech in Urdu and review it for grammar. Use AI if needed! Nor for writing, but getting the syntax right.

Practice speaking full Urdu in daily conversation. Avoid the English-Urdu mix. Fluency only comes from full immersion. Go out there to deliver your message, not win a contest.

I owe my success to years of reading Urdu content, which unknowingly prepared me for this moment.









From Texas My Wild Ride Through the Urdu Speech to Makkah Contest to Karachi to Texas DTM Sarfaraz Nazir Finalist, D122P Urdu Speech Contest 2025 annonnum min

#### CHAMPIONS SPEAK

When Toastmasters International added the *Online Speech Contest* to the 2024–2025 rulebook, I was excited. But when District 122P announced an **Online Urdu Speech Contest**, I nearly spilled my chai latte (tea). After 50 years of living in the U.S., my Urdu was rustier than a bicycle left out in the Karachi rain. The last time I gave a speech in Urdu, I was a student in Karachi... and dinosaurs still roamed the Earth (okay, maybe not quite that long ago).

Still, I thought, why not? I knew I'd be up against Toastmasters who speak Urdu like Shakespeare spoke English—fluent, poetic, and probably with rhyming couplets. Honestly, my odds of winning were slimmer than getting struck by lightning while holding a winning lottery ticket.



#### ROUND 1: Club Contest – January 1, 2025

New Year's Day. While most people were making resolutions they'd forget by February, I was in Texas, giving a speech titled *Taqdeer* (Destiny) at the Karachi Toastmasters Club contest. The theme? *God changes the destiny of those who change their own.* The message? If you want to change your destiny, you need:

(1) Sacrifice, (2) Work like your Wi-Fi depends on it, and (3) A PhD in surviving failure. Little did I know, my own destiny was about to take me on a five-month, 19,991-mile (32,165 km) journey across three countries and four contest levels.

#### ROUND 2: Area Contest – April 20, 2025

After the club contest there was over three months of silence. Then—boom! Area contest announced—while I was in **Makkah**, **Saudi Arabia**. I'd be competing from my hotel room at Al Ghufran Safwah, just steps from the Kaaba and Masjid al-Haram. I could hear the call to prayer and the call of my Toastmasters destiny. That morning, I returned to my room at 4:00 AM. No time to sleep, just enough to enjoy the breakfast buffet.

One hour before showtime, I realized I had a problem: I planned to stand while speaking but had no way to raise my webcam to eye level. Holding the laptop? Not an option. Calling the hotel for a cardboard box? I'd still be explaining my request when the contest ended. Then I spotted my suitcase. Eureka! I placed it on the desk and clipped the webcam to the handle. Perfect height. Who knew suitcase handles were secretly designed for Toastmasters? I was the last speaker—and the first-place winner. Onward to Division!





#### ROUND 3: Division Contest – April 26, 2025



By now, I was in **Karachi, Pakistan**, at my home in Defense Housing Authority. This time, I was ready for the webcam challenge. Eight contestants from four Areas. I was speaker number seven and secured second place—just enough to advance to the district level. I was starting to feel like the Rocky Balboa of Urdu speeches.



#### ROUND 4: District Contest – May 27, 2025

#### Round 4: District Contest - May 27, 2025

Back in **Texas**, I revised my speech. And like every Toastmaster who's ever over-edited, I made two changes that made me want to cry into my Competent Communicator manual. Still, I couldn't believe I was standing among the Urdu-speaking titans after five months.

There were six contestants representing three Divisions. Then came the speaking order randomization (three clicks):

- First round: I was Speaker #4.
- Second round: I was Speaker #2.
- Final round: I was Speaker #1.

I knew I was doomed. Speaking first is like being the opening act before Beyoncé. You warm up the crowd, but no one remembers your name.

#### WHAT I DIDN'T SAY AT THAT TIME

Over 50 years ago, I landed at JFK Airport with:

- One 30-inch black suitcase full of clothes,
- One small carry-on,
- One mini-briefcase with two State Bank of Pakistan checks (one for tuition made out to Oklahoma State University, one for \$180 in personal funds),
- And one crisp **\$20 bill** in my pocket.

I worked hard—and got stuck on the expressway of life. I worked smart—and started going in reverse. Eventually, I created the *Quiet Living Philosophy*, rooted in:

- **Quiet Excelling** Strive for excellence in everything you do.
- Quiet Impacting Make a difference in your work, life, and community.
- Quiet Giving Share your wisdom, success, and service with others.

That's when my destiny changed. Today, I'm financially independent, living the American Dream, and forever grateful to everyone who helped me—whether they offered a hand, a kind word, or even a backstabbing (hey, even betrayal builds character).

So yes, I competed in an Urdu speech contest after 50 years. Five months, a 19,991-mile (32,165 km) journey across three countries, four contest levels, and a speech called *Taqdeer (Destiny)*.





















Crescendo





# epilogue.

## **GOODBYE FROM THE CRESCENDO TEAM** 2023-25.

We wish the best for all of you, for the District, and for Crescendo!















