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Financial Mismanagement Uncovered at QUEST: Millions in Education Funds Allegedly Embezzled

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A sweeping financial scandal has surfaced at Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering, Science and Technology (QUEST), exposing a massive Rs793 million (\$2.8 million) embezzlement involving senior academic officials and development contractors. Investigations are ongoing, with arrests already underway.

A significant corruption case has emerged from QUEST, located in Nawabshah, Pakistan, where funds intended for educational development appear to have been grossly misappropriated. The money allocated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) was supposed to upgrade departments like Software Engineering and Environmental Sciences. Instead, it seems to have vanished into a web of financial misconduct and questionable procurement practices.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Pakistan's federal law enforcement agency tasked with tackling financial and white-collar crimes, launched an investigation following a formal complaint from university staff member Shahnawaz Chandio. His allegations led to the arrest of Qamaruddin Sheikh, Deputy Director of Finance at the university, who was taken into custody during a raid on the campus. Investigators also seized critical documentation from the university's financial office.

Speaking to *The Express Tribune*, FIA Deputy Director Afroz Kalhoro confirmed Sheikh's arrest and stated that additional raids were being conducted to apprehend other individuals suspected of involvement. Early findings suggest that the Rs793 million in funding, meant to improve infrastructure and resources, was instead diverted through inflated purchase orders and ghost procurements.

Official documents reviewed during the probe indicate that 52 air-conditioners, 200 computers, and 39 printers were reportedly procured using HEC funds. However, FIA sources revealed stark irregularities in the process. Equipment deliveries, invoice trails, and vendor records either do not match or are missing altogether, clear red flags for misappropriation and procurement fraud.

Multiple senior figures are now under scrutiny, including faculty and administration heads. Among those named in the First Information Report (FIR) are Nadeem Soomro, Deputy Director at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology; Prof. Pradeep Kumar, Chair of Software Engineering; Prof. Adnan Arain, Chair of Telecommunications; and Prof. Abdul Nasir Laghari of the Environmental Sciences Department. Two contractors, identified as Israr and Syed Mansoor Shah, are also facing charges for their suspected roles in the scheme.

Adding to the suspicion, QUEST Vice Chancellor (VC) Dr. Saleem Raza Samoon abruptly went on leave shortly after the investigation was launched. Though officially listed as being on leave from July 14 to 17, he has not returned or issued a public statement. In his absence, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Zahid Abro has taken over administrative responsibilities.

Repeated efforts to reach Dr. Samoon for comment have gone unanswered. According to FIA officials, the investigation remains active, with more arrests expected as they dig deeper into what appears to be a well-coordinated misappropriation of federal educational resources.