

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PUNJAB



Minutes of the Branch Secretaries' Meeting

Date: Friday, February 7, 2025
Time: 0900-0950 hrs
Venue: Committee Room # 2, New Assembly Building,
Provincial Assembly of the Punjab
Co-Chair: Ch. Amer Habib,
Secretary-General, Punjab Assembly
and
Mrs. Kushani Rohanadeera,
Regional Secretary, CPA Asia / Secretary-General, Parliament of Sri Lanka

1. Opening of the Meeting

The meeting commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran.

Ch. Amer Habib, Secretary-General, Punjab Assembly / Branch Secretary CPA Punjab, welcomed the participants, (list of participants at **Annex-A**) to the Branch Secretaries Meeting of the 1st Joint CPA Asia and South-East Asia Regional Conference.

He highlighted the significance of this meeting in strengthening CPA coordination and collaboration across the region. He underscored the efforts of the Punjab Assembly in hosting the Conference and emphasized the importance of structured discussions and actionable outcomes.

Mrs. Kushani Rohanadeera, Regional Secretary, CPA Asia / Secretary-General, Parliament of Sri Lanka, in her address spoke about the role of branch secretaries in facilitating policy discussions during the Conference on inclusive legislation, minority representation, and climate action. She reiterated the necessity of a strong CPA framework to enhance coordination and emphasized the importance of the upcoming agenda items, particularly constitutional amendments and the regional fund.

The Formal Agenda (**Annex-B**) of the meeting was then taken up.

2. Approval of the Conference Agenda

Ms. Mahira Rafique, Additional Secretary / Conference Coordinator, Provincial Assembly of Punjab, introduced the agenda, which had been pre-circulated among the branches. She

requested participants' concurrence for the proposed program, which was met with unanimous approval.

Decision: The agenda was adopted as circulated.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Secretary-General, Punjab Assembly sought formal approval of the Minutes of the last Branch Secretaries' Meeting (**Annex-C**), held during the 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference in 2019, Islamabad. He invited comments from the participants. As no concerns were raised, the minutes were formally approved.

Decision: The minutes were formally approved.

4. Amendments to the Constitution of the CPA Asia Region

The following amendments had been moved during the Branch Secretaries and Regional Executive Committee Meetings held during the 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference, 2019 held in Islamabad.

- i. Change of nomenclature of NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Articles 3 and 18 of the Constitution
- ii. Fixation of term of the Regional Representatives at the Executive Committee in Article 8 (a) from three years to three annual conferences in line with the Constitution of the CPA.

The above amendments could not be adopted as the Article 15 of the Constitution required 30 days advance intimation of the proposed amendments to the Constitution. Therefore, the meeting had decided that the above amendments may be moved and approved during the next Conference.

The Committee was briefed that the province of NWFP had been officially renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Constitution of CPA Asia needed to reflect the official renaming. Furthermore, the fixation of term of regional representatives at the CPA International Executive Committee from three years to three annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences (CPCs), ensuring alignment with the CPA International Constitution. Due to disruptions caused by COVID-19, the CPA International Committee adjusted its terms, and the three-yearly term mentioned in the CPA Asia Region's Constitution for the Regional Representatives as well as the CPA Asia Chair, too needed to align with this new format. Participants agreed that these changes were necessary to maintain uniformity and prevent administrative confusion.

Decision: The proposed amendments were approved and forwarded to the Regional Executive Committee for decision.

5. Adoption of Ancillary Procedures

The committee reviewed and discussed the following proposed ancillary procedures:

- Implementing an **alphabetical rotation system for a term of three-annual CPA conferences** for the election of provincial assemblies to the Regional Executive Committee ensuring structured representation.
- Inclusion of **virtual meetings** to maintain regular communication and minimize gaps in coordination.
- Declaring **Islamabad as the permanent headquarters** of CPA Asia Region, whereas, the Chair of the Regional Executive Committee, alongwith the Regional Secretaryship and the **Regional Secretariat shall rotate** with each National Parliament for a three-annual CPC term on alphabetical basis.
- Establishing **criteria for observer status**, ensuring that only recognized and democratic institutions can participate.

On the request of Punjab Assembly, these procedures had been pre-circulated by the CPA Asia Regional Secretariat among the member branches, 30 days before the conference. As per consensus, the term for provincial rotation was also determined to be alphabetical for a three-conference term instead of three-year term. This was seen to align with the rotation of the Asia Region Chair. There was also unanimous agreement on declaring Islamabad as the Permanent Headquarters of the CPA Asia Region as well as the criteria for observers detailed in the Ancillary Procedures.

Decision: The proposals were endorsed and forwarded to the Regional ExCo for final adoption.

6. Election of Provincial Member to the Regional Executive Committee

Secretary-General, Punjab Assembly explained the need for a provincial representative in the Regional ExCo. Punjab Assembly proposed initiating the first three-annual CPC term, followed by Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in alphabetical order.

Participants supported the structured rotation model, ensuring each province gets representation. The election of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab to the Regional Executive Committee for a three-CPC tenure beginning at the conclusion of the 68th CPC in Barbados, October 2025 was unanimously endorsed.

Decision: Nomination and Election of Provincial Assembly of the Punjab to be finalized in the Regional Executive Committee Meeting.

7. Creation of a Regional Fund

It was discussed that the agenda for the establishment of a regional fund for organizing conferences and activities had been the pending agenda since 2012. It had been previously discussed during the regional conferences held in Sri Lanka, Karachi, and Islamabad. The participants deliberated upon the following key points:

- The previous voluntary contribution system was ineffective due to inconsistent participation by Parliament of Bangladesh.
- A revised financial model was being proposed: \$5,000 per year for national branches and \$2,000 for provincial assemblies.
- CPA Sri Lanka Branch confirmed the availability of previously allocated funds; Indian Rupees 2.5 million from the CPA India Branch (equivalent to Sri Lankan Rupees 5.5 million), currently held in the Bank of Ceylon, Parliament Branch which could be transferred to Islamabad upon formalization of the headquarters.
- Regarding the establishment of the regional fund, Srilankan Secretary-General proposed to defer it in absence of Bangladesh, as the matter had financial implications.
- DG Punjab Assembly, Mr Khalid Mehmood suggested that the resolution may be adopted subject to subsequent endorsement by Bangladesh.
- Deputy Secretary-General, CPA Mr. Jarvis Matiya's opinion was also sought on the matter who suggested to circulate a time bound resolution to the Parliament of Bangladesh, in the absence of response to which, the resolution may be deemed to have been endorsed by them.

Decision: The matter was deferred for final decision by the Regional ExCo with reservations of the Branch Secretaries Forum.

8. Calendar of Activities for 2025

Key activities proposed for 2025:

- **Host for the next CPA Asia Regional Conference:** The Provincial Assembly of Sindh, Pakistan, expressed interest in hosting the next conference.
- **Election/Rotation of Regional Representatives at the CPA International Executive Committee:** Bangladesh's representative tenure was ending (being filled in by Member National Assembly of Pakistan), and the Federal Parliament of Pakistan is next in line.
- **Rotation of the Chair of CPA Asia Region:** Parliament of Bangladesh is next in line after the Parliament of Sri Lanka to hold the Chairpersonship of the CPA Asia Region at the conclusion of the 68th CPC. However, if the Bangladesh Parliament is not

reconstituted by October 2025, the chairpersonship will move to the Parliament of Maldives for the next 3 annual CPA Conferences.

- **Next Regional ExCo Meeting:** Proposed to be held on the sidelines of the 68th CPC in Barbados.

Participants debated logistical challenges in hosting events and emphasized the need for a structured timeline to avoid disruptions.

Decision: The activities were approved for further discussion and adoption at the Regional ExCo meeting.

9. Other Matters

- **Proposal for a CPA Asia Region Website:** The Punjab Assembly proposed the creation of an online platform to consolidate CPA documents and upcoming activities. Participants agreed that a centralized information hub would improve coordination and accessibility.

Decision: The proposal was endorsed to be forwarded to the National Assembly Secretariat for implementation, once formalized as the Headquarter of the CPA Asia Region.

10. Conclusion

Secretary-General Punjab Assembly expressed gratitude for the active participation of all members. He reiterated the importance of continued collaboration and emphasized that the outcomes of this meeting would shape CPA Asia's future strategic direction.

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was formally concluded.
