

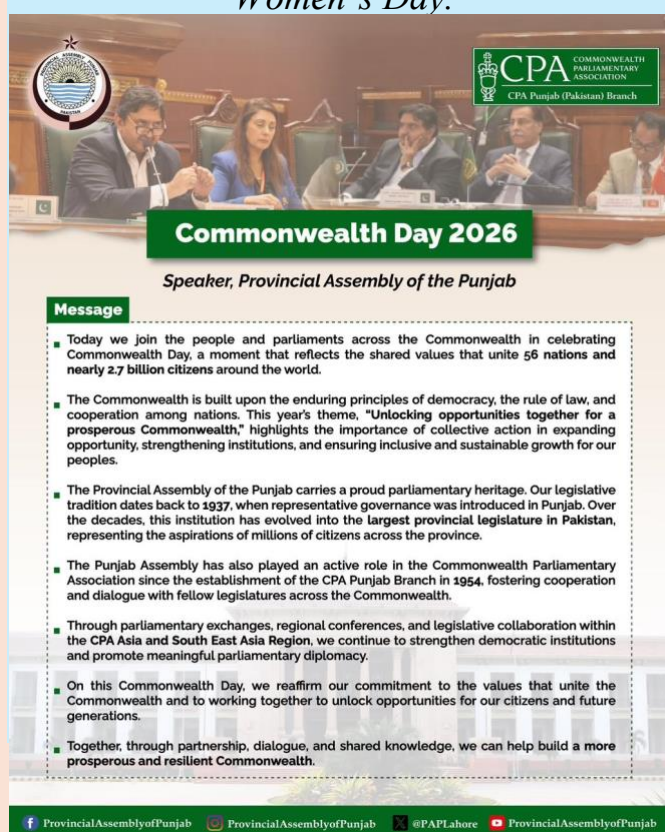
MONTHLY E-CIRCULAR FEBRUARY–MARCH 2026

During February and March 2026, the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab remained actively engaged in Commonwealth parliamentary affairs, international observances, parliamentary thought leadership, public outreach and legislative business. The period reflected the Assembly's continuing commitment to democratic values, inclusion, parliamentary diplomacy and citizen engagement.

COMMONWEALTH VALUES & INTERNATIONAL OBSERVANCES

Punjab Assembly Observes International Women's Day and Commonwealth Day

Punjab Assembly messages marking Commonwealth Day 2026 and International Women's Day.

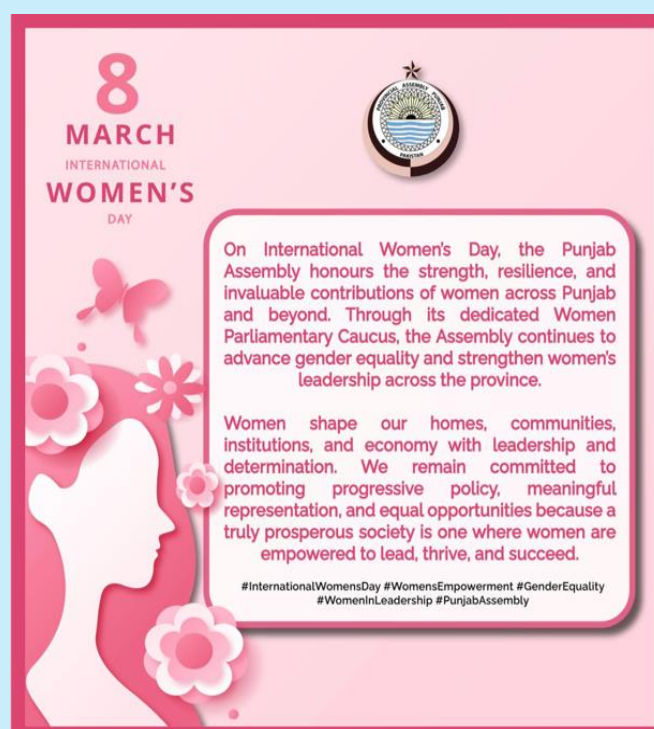


Commonwealth Day 2026
Speaker, Provincial Assembly of the Punjab

Message

- Today we join the people and parliaments across the Commonwealth in celebrating Commonwealth Day, a moment that reflects the shared values that unite 56 nations and nearly 2.7 billion citizens around the world.
- The Commonwealth is built upon the enduring principles of democracy, the rule of law, and cooperation among nations. This year's theme, "Unlocking opportunities together for a prosperous Commonwealth," highlights the importance of collective action in expanding opportunity, strengthening institutions, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth for our peoples.
- The Provincial Assembly of the Punjab carries a proud parliamentary heritage. Our legislative tradition dates back to 1937, when representative governance was introduced in Punjab. Over the decades, this institution has evolved into the largest provincial legislature in Pakistan, representing the aspirations of millions of citizens across the province.
- The Punjab Assembly has also played an active role in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association since the establishment of the CPA Punjab Branch in 1954, fostering cooperation and dialogue with fellow legislatures across the Commonwealth.
- Through parliamentary exchanges, regional conferences, and legislative collaboration within the CPA Asia and South East Asia Region, we continue to strengthen democratic institutions and promote meaningful parliamentary diplomacy.
- On this Commonwealth Day, we reaffirm our commitment to the values that unite the Commonwealth and to working together to unlock opportunities for our citizens and future generations.
- Together, through partnership, dialogue, and shared knowledge, we can help build a more prosperous and resilient Commonwealth.

ProvincialAssemblyofPunjab ProvincialAssemblyofPunjab @PAPLahore ProvincialAssemblyofPunjab



8 MARCH
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

On International Women's Day, the Punjab Assembly honours the strength, resilience, and invaluable contributions of women across Punjab and beyond. Through its dedicated Women Parliamentary Caucus, the Assembly continues to advance gender equality and strengthen women's leadership across the province.

Women shape our homes, communities, institutions, and economy with leadership and determination. We remain committed to promoting progressive policy, meaningful representation, and equal opportunities because a truly prosperous society is one where women are empowered to lead, thrive, and succeed.

#InternationalWomensDay #WomensEmpowerment #GenderEquality
#WomenInLeadership #PunjabAssembly

During March 2026, the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab marked important Commonwealth and international observances, including **International Women's Day on 8 March 2026** and **Commonwealth Day on 9 March 2026**. These occasions provided an opportunity to reaffirm the Assembly's commitment to democratic values, inclusion, women's empowerment and parliamentary engagement across the Commonwealth. The 2026 Commonwealth Day theme, "Unlocking opportunities together for a prosperous Commonwealth," closely aligned with these shared ideals.

PARLIAMENTARY KNOWLEDGE & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Punjab Voices Featured in The Parliamentarian and National Media

The Provincial Assembly of the Punjab continued to contribute to parliamentary thought leadership through published writing. In **The Parliamentarian 2026: Issue One**, Ms **Salma Saeed Hashmi, MPA Punjab**, contributed an article on advancing disability inclusion through legislative leadership.

BANGLADESH ELECTIONS

The first competitive parliamentary elections in over a decade have restored democracy to Bangladesh after eighteen months of rule by an unelected interim government. Led by Yunus, the interim administration had initiated the task of reforming the country's constitution and electoral system.

Holding the first competitive general election since 2008 restores the people's sovereign right to elect a government dedicated to welfare and good governance. A significant number of voters, especially from Gen Z, had previously been unable to exercise their franchise, as Sheikh Hasina's rule was largely characterised by 'constitutional autocracy' maintained through rigged elections.

Six Gen Z leaders were elected as MPs and will serve as members of the Constitution Reform Council. In terms of gender representation, 85 women candidates contested the elections, although only seven emerged victorious.

The polls under Yunus were largely participatory. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding their credibility, as the interim administration barred Sheikh Hasina's party, the Bangladesh Awami League, from contesting. The party, which played a key role in the 1971 War of Independence, had traditionally commanded at least 30% of the popular votes. Religious minority groups and small ethnic communities historically support the Awami League due to its secular political ideology.

Hasina's overthrow by the Gen-Z-led 'July Uprising' has created a new political reality. Young voters, in particular, remain sceptical of the country's long-standing duopoly dominated by the BNP and the Awami League. Leaders of the 2024

movement formed a new political party - the National Citizens' Party (NCP) - which contested the polls in an 11-party alliance with the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and other conservative, faith-based parties.

In past elections, Jamaat-e-Islami's popular vote share typically stagnated in the single digits; their previous high was 18 seats in 1991 while allied with the BNP. Their historically poor performance was often attributed to their controversial role in the 1971 war of independence, during which the party sided with the Pakistan Army that committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

However, the NCP-Jamaat alliance stunned observers in the 2024 elections. Combined, they won 77 seats with nearly 32% of the popular vote, trailing the BNP's approximately 50% share. Jamaat's growing influence has drawn global attention, with some international observers describing it as a major resurgence in Bangladeshi politics.

The Jamaat-led alliance is likely to pressure the ruling BNP to execute the 'July Charter' proposals. The NCP has already announced its intention to build a 'Second Republic' through an entirely new constitution.

Conversely, while the BNP and its allies respect the spirit of the uprising, they are reluctant to adopt every proposal in the 'July Charter', having registered notes of dissent during its drafting. While the BNP advocates for amending the existing constitution, the NCP and Jamaat are pushing for a completely new constitution. With more than two-thirds of the seats, the BNP will now play a pivotal role in deciding whether Professor Yunus's reform agenda is fully realised or stalled by these legislative disagreements.

In recent years, disability inclusion has moved steadily from the margins of public debate to the centre of parliamentary responsibility. This shift reflects a growing understanding that inclusive governance is not achieved through intent alone, but through sustained legislative attention, oversight and public engagement. For Legislatures, the question is no longer whether disability inclusion should be addressed, but how effectively it is embedded within law-making and democratic practice.

Within the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, the rights and needs of children with disabilities have increasingly informed parliamentary discussion. As legislators, we are conscious that exclusion at an early stage of life often leads to lifelong disadvantages. Addressing this reality is not only a social obligation; it is a legislative duty grounded in principles of equality, dignity and representation.

Disability Inclusion as a Legislative Matter

Disability is often misunderstood as a matter to be resolved solely through service delivery. From a legislative perspective, however, it is fundamentally a question of rights, access and accountability. Laws shape priorities. Parliamentary debate shapes public understanding. Oversight ensures that commitments are not reduced to statements of intent.

In the Punjab Assembly, disability inclusion has been approached as a cross-cutting concern rather than a standalone issue. Members have repeatedly stressed the importance of ensuring that legislation relating to education, social protection, public access and child welfare reflects the realities faced by children with disabilities. This approach recognises that exclusion is rarely caused by a single gap in

Disability Inclusion

ADVANCING DISABILITY INCLUSION THROUGH LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

policy; it is usually the result of systemic oversight.

The role of the Parliamentary Caucus for Children with Disabilities
The Parliamentary Caucus for Children with Disabilities was formed to provide focused legislative attention to an area that is often underrepresented in parliamentary discourse. As a cross-party forum, the Caucus allows Members to engage beyond political divisions, share perspectives and keep the issue of children with disabilities firmly on the legislative agenda.

The work of the Caucus is rooted in parliamentary functions - advocacy within the Provincial Assembly, contribution to legislative debate and sustained attention through Committee engagement. Its purpose is not administrative. Rather, it exists to ensure that the voices and concerns of children with disabilities are reflected in the laws that we debate and the questions we raise as legislators.

Parliamentary Awareness and Public Engagement
Legislation does not operate in isolation from society. Recognising this, the Caucus undertook a parliamentary-led awareness initiative to reinforce the link between law-making and public understanding. This initiative was designed and led by Members of the Provincial Assembly, reflecting a belief that Parliamentarians must also act as advocates for inclusion.

The initiative included a series of seminars that brought together legislators, legal scholars, educators, civil society representatives and families of children with disabilities. These discussions were practical and grounded, focusing on lived experience, legislative gaps and the responsibilities of elected representatives.

In addition, awareness walks were organised to signal publicly that disability inclusion is a matter of legislative concern. These walks were not symbolic gestures alone; they were deliberate efforts to affirm that the rights of children with disabilities belong within the democratic space and deserve visible parliamentary support.

Legislative Oversight and Accountability
Oversight is one of the most powerful tools available to a Legislature. In the context of disability inclusion, it allows Parliamentarians to examine whether existing laws and policy commitments deliver meaningful outcomes.

Members of the Punjab Provincial Assembly have raised issues relating to accessibility, inclusion and service provision through parliamentary questions and debates. Such engagement ensures that disability-related concerns remain part of the formal legislative record and subject to public scrutiny. Oversight, when exercised consistently, reinforces accountability and strengthens public confidence in democratic institutions.

Children with Disabilities as a Legislative Priority
Children with disabilities face distinct and layered challenges. From a legislative standpoint, addressing these challenges requires sustained attention rather than episodic concern. Parliamentary discussion in Punjab has increasingly reflected the need for child-centred legal frameworks that prioritise access, quality and equity.

The Caucus has consistently emphasised that inclusion is not achieved by recognition alone. It requires laws that are responsive, oversight that is vigilant and a willingness to revisit legislative



Hon. Salma Saeed, MPA is a Member of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, Pakistan and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Caucus for Children with Disabilities.

approaches when outcomes fall short of expectations.

Looking Beyond Borders
Globally, a number of countries - including China, Saudi Arabia and the United States - have adopted comprehensive approaches to disability inclusion through law and long-term policy planning. While political and legal systems differ, these examples demonstrate that progress depends on sustained legislative commitment. For Punjab, the task is to move steadily towards stronger, more coherent legislative frameworks that reflect both international standards and local realities.

Conclusion
The experience of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab demonstrates that Legislatures have a central role to play in advancing disability inclusion. Through debate, oversight and public engagement, Parliamentarians shape both policy outcomes and public attitudes.

As Chairperson of the Parliamentary Caucus for Children with Disabilities, I remain convinced that inclusive legislation is not an abstract ideal but a practical responsibility. When Parliamentarians place children with disabilities at the heart of their work, they strengthen not only individual rights but the democratic fabric of society itself.

Selected References:

- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Guidelines for Disability Inclusive Parliaments
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

18 | The Parliamentarian | 2026: Issue One | Over 100 years of publishing

The Parliamentarian | 2026: Issue One | Over 100 years of publishing | 19

Official/reference source: [Read the article in The Parliamentarian](#)

In addition, **Ch. Amer Habib, Secretary General, Provincial Assembly of the Punjab**, authored **“From local to global: Punjab Assembly’s expanding parliamentary role,”** published in *The Nation*. Together, these contributions reflected the Assembly’s commitment to inclusive legislative leadership and the strengthening of parliamentary diplomacy.

Official/reference source: [Read the article in The Nation](#)

CPA & REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT

Punjab Assembly Participates in CPA Asia Regional Conference in Karachi

At the regional level, the Punjab Assembly remained actively engaged in Commonwealth parliamentary affairs through its participation in the **7th CPA Asia Region and 2nd Joint CPA Asia and South-East Asia Regional Conference**, held in Karachi from **3 to 7 February 2026**. **Hon. Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan**, Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, participated in the CPA Asia Regional Executive Committee Meeting during the conference and also addressed the Plenary Session on Day 1.

Members of the Punjab Branch likewise participated actively in the conference proceedings, including the various sessions and plenary sittings held throughout the event.



OFFICIAL GROUP PHOTO OF SPEAKERS



Speaker Punjab Assembly addressing the Plenary Session at the 7th CPA Asia Regional Conference on: "Peace and Democratic Trust: Parliaments as Engines of Reconciliation"

Official/reference source: [Punjab Assembly conference photographs](#)

PUBLIC OUTREACH & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening Citizen Interaction and Educational Exposure

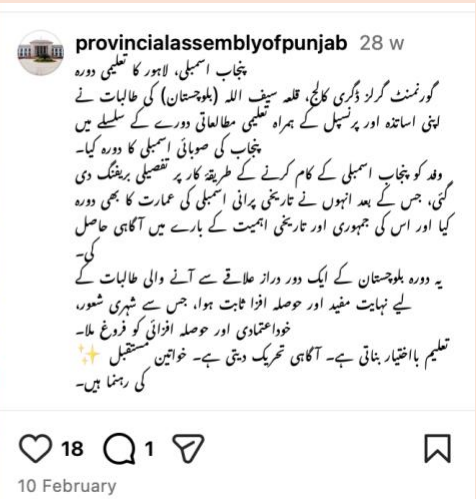
The Assembly also continued to advance public outreach and citizen engagement through initiatives designed to strengthen public understanding of parliamentary institutions. In this regard, “**Speaker aur Awam**” remained an important platform for public interaction and outreach.



لاہور: سپیکر پنجاب اسمبلی ملک محمد احمد خاں "سپیکر اور عوام" سیشن میں مختلف تعلیمی اداروں کے طالبہ اور طالبات کے سوالات کے جواب دے رہے ہیں۔ مورخہ 18-02-2026

Official/reference source: [Punjab Assembly outreach image](#)

The Assembly also welcomed the visit of students from **Government Degree College, Qilla Saifullah, Balochistan**, reflecting its commitment to youth engagement, educational exposure and inter-provincial understanding.



Official/reference source: [Punjab Assembly social media coverage](#)

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

Diplomatic and Courtesy Call-Ons at the Punjab Assembly

The Assembly's parliamentary diplomacy also remained visible through official Punjab Assembly records of diplomatic and courtesy call-ons, documenting sustained engagement with ambassadors, diplomats and visiting delegations.

Official/reference source: [Diplomatic Courtesy Call-Ons at Punjab Assembly](#)

LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Public-Interest Legislation Under Consideration

In terms of legislative business, the Punjab Assembly's official bills portal reflects active consideration of major public-interest legislation in 2026, including **The Punjab Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2026** and **The Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property (Amendment) Bill 2026**. These legislative developments reflect the Assembly's continuing focus on legal reform, governance and social protection.

Official/reference source: [Punjab Assembly Bills Portal](#)

Through these activities, the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab continued to project an active institutional profile rooted in legislative business, parliamentary diplomacy, inclusive leadership and public engagement, in line with the objectives and spirit of the CPA Asia Region.
