

**FORTY-THIRD  
INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

**CALCUTTA**

**1928**

## FOREWORD

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The Secretaries of the Reception Committee of the Calcutta Session of the National Congress kindly undertook to see this report through the press. The labour and responsibility involved in this work has thus fallen on them, and on behalf of my co-Secretary and myself I have to express our indebtedness to them.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,  
*General Secretary,*  
A. I. C. C.

ALLAHABAD,  
June 25th, 1929.

INTRODUCTION 38657  
TO THE  
CALCUTTA CONGRESS REPORT.

GENERAL.

When the question of deciding upon the venue of the next Congress came before the A. I. C. C. meeting at Gauhati, there was a feeling amongst many members that in view of the impending enquiry into the Constitution of India, the Congress for the years 1927 and 1928 should be held in a big Provincial City like Madras, Calcutta or Bombay and the first choice fell upon Madras. When the same matter came up for decision in 1927 at Madras, Punjab although anxious to have the Congress in Lahore, stood aside in favour of Bengal. The Session, therefore, took place in Calcutta. It was rather a queer coincidence that the Simon Commission arrived in Calcutta only three hours after the arrival of the President-elect Pandit Motilal Nehru. No one could fail noticing the differential behaviour of the people of the country. It gave them a unique opportunity to give a royal welcome to the President of the Congress. This was as enthusiastic as their boycott of the Simon Commission was deliberate.

The Congress Session of 1928, was unique from other points of view. The All Parties Conference had met at Lucknow in August and had decided to meet at Calcutta during Congress Week. The Reception Committee had to look for the arrangements for the holding of the Sessions of the All Parties Conference which commenced on the 22nd of December. They had to arrange for the board and accommodation of the delegates to the Convention, many of whom were not even members of or delegates to the Congress. This practically meant a prolonged Congress Session of a fortnight, starting from 20th of December, when the guests began to arrive till the 3rd of January when they departed. The workers and the volunteers had a strenuous time and the Committee are very grateful for the ungrudging services rendered by these men in order to make the sojourn of the visitors as comfortable as possible.

This was the first occasion in the history of the Congress when a deliberate attempt was made to give to the President a military wel-

come. Over two thousand volunteers took part in the procession, mostly on foot; there were 50 cavalry men, about 200 cyclist volunteers. They marched from the Howrah Station to the Congress Grounds a distance of over four miles and managed to keep the enormous crowd under control.

This was the Session, again, when the labourers numbering over 50,000 men from neighbouring mill areas marched in an orderly fashion and saluted the national flag hoisted in the Congress grounds and occupied the Pandal for nearly two hours, passed their resolutions deciding for Independence for India and then walked out. It was a unique scene and indicated more clearly than any arguments would show what the real heart of India pined for.

#### FINANCIAL.

When the Reception Committee first met, doubts were expressed as to the feasibility of realising suitable sums for meeting the expenses, the estimates for which reached a high figure. A strong Committee was formed for raising subscription and enlisting members of the Reception Committee. The response was slow in the beginning. The total number enlisted on the 10th of December were only 935 but by the 20th the number had risen to 1389 and on the 25th the number had reached the maximum number of seats available for members of the Reception Committee and then the list was closed. The sale of visitors' tickets and ladies' tickets were much beyond our estimate.

The eagerness shown for the purchase of tickets was a complete proof that the people realised the momentous nature of the session.

#### ARRANGEMENTS.

In order to facilitate the work of the Reception Committee, two Executive Committees were formed, one to deal with arrangements regarding holding of the Congress session and the other with the Exhibition. The Congress Committee then appointed sub-committees to raise subscriptions, organise volunteer corps, attend to the publicity of Congress news, respond to the numerous enquiries made regarding the Congress, look after the boarding and kitchen arrangements of the delegates. Each sub-committee worked with a Secretary. The Exhi-

bition Committee also appointed sub-committees for the Khaddar, Education, Public Health, Agriculture, General, Industrial and Amusement Sections, each section being in charge of an organiser. The Reception Committee also appointed a Chairman, a General Secretary, an Exhibition Secretary and a Finance Committee to look after the accounts, indicate the ways and means and be responsible for necessary financial accounts.

The Reception Committee, after much enquiry fixed upon Park Circus as the most suitable area for the holding of the Sessions. The Calcutta Improvement Trust and the owners of all land in the neighbourhood gave us the use of property free of cost for the purpose of building the main and accessory pandals, the erection of the Exhibition stalls and offices and the construction of delegates' quarters, kitchen and the volunteer quarters. Nearly 2,500 volunteers and 2,500 delegates were accommodated during the Congress session in this area. The main pandal was 300 ft. by 300 ft. It was unique in design made of *hogla* and bamboos and served its purpose well. It was meant to hold 25,000 people but during the visit of the labourers to the Pandal on 31st December nearly 35,000 on modest computation were accommodated inside the Pandal. The entrance into the Pandal was from the east of the Park and that to the Exhibition was from the west. At the centre of the Congress oval was erected a flag staff 60 ft. high from which floated the huge Swaraj flag, hoisted on the 28th December by Pandit Matilal Nehru. Separate gates of entrance into the Pandal were provided for the members of the A. I. C. C., ladies, the distinguished visitors, the delegates, the members of the Reception Committee and the ordinary visitors.

Besides the main Pandal, three other pandals were erected, one for the Subjects Committee, one for the All Parties Convention, and one for holding all other Conferences.

The whole area of 100 bighas, on which the different structures for holding the Congress, Conferences, Exhibition, kitchen and quarters for the delegates and volunteers were erected was called Deshbandhunar after the great leader, the late Chittaranjan Das. The Railway Companies, the Post and Telegraph Departments opened branch offices for the comfort and convenience of the delegates and visitors to the Congress and Exhibition.

The lighting of the Congress and Exhibition grounds and the delegates and volunteers' quarters was done from gas and electricity supplied respectively by the Oriental Gas Company and the Calcutta Electric Supply Co. Besides this, electricity was generated on the grounds from tractor engines supplied free of cost by the Runo Engineering Works and Messrs. Martin & Co. The water supply for the delegates was found to be deficient and a tube well was constructed which gave ample supply of water. The conservancy arrangements were very satisfactory; 400 connected privies and urinals were provided in different parts of the Nagar for the use of the thousands of people who daily visited the area. The sanitary arrangements were effectively supervised by the medical volunteers and their officers and first aid in cases of accidents and injuries were given by them. The traffic both vehicular and pedestrian were controlled very admirably by the volunteers aided by the cavalry. Two hundred volunteers were detailed to form fire brigade and they were in charges of trained officers. The Calcutta Corporation helped the Congress Authorities in many ways and gave full use of their roads, men and equipment.

The 43rd Session of the Congress was a unique event and its success was due to the help rendered by the Corporations and Associations mentioned above, to the ungrudging services of the workers and the volunteers and last and not the least due to the fine response of men of the province and the keen enthusiasm of the delegates and visitors who thronged the Assemblies and Meetings.