

INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS HOLDS ITS 73RD SESSION AT MUMBAI

— From a Correspondent

Over 1,500 historians from all parts of India met at Mumbai on 28-30 December 2012 for the 73rd session of the Indian History Congress. The session was held under the aegis of the University of Mumbai at its Kalina campus.

The three-day conference began with the inaugural session at the main University hall on the morning of the 28th December. The Governor of Maharashtra, K. Sankaranarayana, was the Chief Guest, and the session was addressed also by Maharashtra's Minister of Higher Education Rajesh Tope, and his colleague, the State Minister of Higher Education, D.P. Sawant. The new General President, Professor Y. Subbarayalu was installed, succeeding Professor B.B. Chaudhuri. Professor Subbarayalu is one of the country's foremost historians, his special field being the agrarian and social history of Tamilnadu as well as the historical geography of South India. His Presidential Address delivered at the inaugural session dealt with problems of political units in the geography of Ancient India and ancient and medieval south India.

From the afternoon following the inaugural session, the Congress divided into Sections where, first of all, the addresses of the different Sectional Presidents were presented. Professor Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, President, Ancient India Section, devoted his address to the interesting theme of Irrigation and Agriculture in Ancient India, on which he cited much literary and

epigraphic evidence. Professor Ashraf Wani, presiding over the Medieval India section, dealt with the problems Kashmir posed for Akbar, when he annexed it to the Mughal Empire. Professor David R. Syiemlieh, President, Modern India Section, had a very perceptive treatment to offer on the cultural and political effects of the work of Christian missions in the North-east. Professor Sneh Mahajan in her Presidential Address at the Section on Countries other than India, spoke on imperialist historiography and argued that “an attempt is (now) being made in western countries to legitimize and normalize imperialism by avoiding references to aspects like violence, impact of civilizational arrogance and economic exploitation.” Dr. K.S. Saraswat, as President of the Section on Archaeology, contributed a most informative address on the crop history of Northern India. Finally, Professor Ramachandra Guha, President, Contemporary India, boldly took up the question of violence and democracy in Kashmir and in Sri Lanka, and pleaded, the case in both instances, for a “dignified autonomy”. Owing to a personal bereavement Professor Guha had to return home from Mumbai, and his address was presented *in absentia*.

The major work of the Congress, namely, presentation of papers, then, began in each Section. The number of papers submitted by delegates was exceptionally large. The printed list of papers ran to the number of 767, whereas at the last (72nd) session held at Patiala 641 papers had been listed. These lists are interesting since they indicate which way the historians’ interests are shifting. The current new favourite fields appear to be women’s history and dalit history. In the Section on contemporary India ‘Naxalism’ also

has attracted noticeable attention. In Ancient and Medieval India Sections there seems to be a shift away from purely dynastic history in favour of economic, social and cultural aspects. There is a welcome decline in papers with chauvinistic and communal overtones. One hopes, however, that there will be more problem-oriented papers rather than mere descriptive ones. If more senior historians also present such papers in the Sections, this would surely encourage younger scholars to follow suit. However, the fact remains that, as it is, the Presidential addresses and papers at the Indian History Congress every year add substantially to historical knowledge.

The S.C.Misra Memorial Lecture was delivered by Professor J.V. Naik, on the 29th. His theme was an unusual one, viz., the life and work of Professor R.D. Karve, an “unsung” man of reason and science, and a crusader for family planning and birth control.

On the second evening of the session, the Symposium on Visual Arts was held in the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Hall, with Professor R.N. Misra discoursing on his discoveries of sculptures and *math*-structures in Central India and Dr. S.A. Nadeem Rezavi pursuing changes in medieval architectural styles. Unfortunately, painting was left uncovered.

A galaxy of scholars sent papers for the panel on “Literature and Reality in Indian Culture” organised by the Aligarh Historians Society in collaboration with the Indian History Congress. These included Professors Kumkum Roy, Annapurna Chattopadhyay, M.S. Mate, G.T. Kulkarni, Sushil Chaudhury, Shalini Shah, Shireen Moosvi, J.S. Grewal, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Mushirul

Hasan, S.Z.H. Jafri, Gopa Datta, Ranabir Chakravarti, Malini Bhattacharya, B. Surendra Rao, Bhairabi Sahu, B.B. Chaudhuri, and Arun Bandhopadhyay and Dr Christine Chojnacki from France. Owing to fog interfering with flights or for other reasons, some of the scholars, despite their having sent papers, were unable to attend. However, since the papers were all pre-circulated, lively discussions marked the two-day proceedings of the panel. Professor Irfan Habib stated, on behalf of the AHS, that the contributions would hopefully be published at an early date.

One valuable feature of the Indian History Congress's functioning is that the volume of Proceedings of the previous year's session is printed in the intervening period and distributed to members at the current session. Members were thus able to receive the two-volume Proceedings of the 72nd session, which contained over 100 papers. Many of these papers won endowed prizes which were announced and distributed at the inaugural session. It was also announced that the Rajwade Lifetime Achievement Award instituted by Professor A.R. Kulkarni, had been awarded to Professor Satish Chandra, the well-known veteran historian of Medieval India.

At the annual General Body meeting of members of the Indian History Congress, two resolutions, recommended by the Executive Committee, were passed: one relating to the affairs at the Archaeological Survey and the other on the proposal to dissolve the Indian Council of Historical Research and other similar Councils under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. *These are given in Box on this page.*

**RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE GENERAL BODY,
31 December 2013**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

The Indian History Congress meeting at its 73rd session, recalls its many resolutions calling upon all concerned to improve the functioning of the Archaeological Survey of India. It had welcomed in the past session the appointment, at long last, of a professional expert as Director General of the Archaeological Survey. It is now happy to note that the ASI has began issuing *Ancient India* (new series), and *Epigraphia Indica* and *Epigraphia Indica (Arabic & Persian Supplement)*, and so terminated the unexplained decades-long gaps in their publication. The History Congress regrets, however, that there continue to be severe lapses in well-established cases of gross interference with structures of monuments which have not been rectified or even enquired into, such as the recent case of Char Minar at Hyderabad. There seem also to be some other disturbing developments. It is understood that in an assessment of the work of the Director-General, ASI, an expert has been involved who has shown his bias by personally attacking the present Director General in a weekly Journal of questionable repute. While all assessments are welcome, it must be ensured that such efforts be impeccably non-partisan and professionally credible.

Resolved further that this resolution be conveyed to all authorities concerned.

INDIAN COUNCIL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The Indian History Congress notes that a proposal is under consideration at the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, to merge ICHR, ICSSR, ICPR and other organizations under its jurisdiction, and create a new single council or agency. This Congress is of considered opinion that this, if implemented, would be an unfortunate measure. It is of the firm view that a subject like History requires a separate specialized mechanism for its proper support and development, and the continued existence of the Indian Council of Historical Research is therefore of critical importance. Nor is it a reasonable policy to concentrate all authority in a single agency controlled by a much smaller number of persons, in place of specialized institutions based on broader compositions of Councils or controlling bodies.

Resolved further that this resolution be communicated to all authorities concerned.

It was announced that the Executive Committee has elected Professor Indu Banga (Chandigarh) as the next General President, and that the following have been elected as the Sectional Presidents and Office Bearers for the next session:

Sectional Presidents:

Section I:	Ancient India :	Prof. K.N. Ganesh
Section II:	Medieval India:	Prof. Pius Malekandathil
Section III:	Modern India :	Prof. Raj Sekhar Basu
Section IV:	Countries other than India:	Prof. Utsa Patnaik
Section V:	Archaeology:	Prof. K.K. Bhan
Section VI:	Contemporary India:	Prof. Aijaz Ahmad

Office Bearers

Vice-Presidents:	1. Prof. Irfan Habib 2. Prof. B.B. Chaudhary
Secretary:	Prof. S.Z.H. Jafri
Treasurer:	Dr. (Mrs) Tripta Verma (Delhi)
Joint Secretaries:	1. Dr. J.J. Sudhakar 2. Dr Dayanand Roy

In the meantime, arrangements for election to the Executive Committee had been made. However, polling proved to be unnecessary, since the following were elected unopposed:-

E.C. Members

1. Prof. Apurba Chakravarti
2. Prof. Arun Bandopadhyaya
3. Prof. B.P. Sahu
4. Prof. B.S. Chandrababu

5. Prof. Chandi Prasad Nanda
6. Prof. C.P.N. Sinha
7. Prof. Dharmendra Kumar
8. Prof. G.S.L. Devra
9. Prof. Jahnabi Gogoi Nath
10. Prof. J.V. Naik
11. Prof. Kulbir Singh Dhillon
12. Prof. K.T. Thomas
13. Dr. Mahendra Pratap
14. Prof. M. Ventateshwar Rao
15. Prof. Radhika Seshan
16. Prof. Rajan Saikia
17. Prof. Shireen Moosvi
18. Prof. Surendra Rao
19. Prof. Susnata Das
20. Prof. T.R. Ghoble

Owing to the effort made by Shri Sharad Pawar, the Union Minister for Agriculture, who took great interest in the holding of the History Congress session at Mumbai, the Government of Maharashtra made a very generous grant of Rs.2 crore to the University of Mumbai. Unfortunately, the Mumbai University authorities did not shine as hosts despite such resources. Most delegates were put in crowded rooms and made to sleep on the floor; and other simple facilities were not made available. The friendly attitude of the many members of the University faculty, students and non-teaching staff somewhat made up for these deficiencies. The Local Secretary, Prof. T.R. Ghoble also did his best in the circumstances. But still, given the financial resources placed in the hosts' hands, the lack of actual resources deployed remains inexplicable.

It should be mentioned that though few publishers and distributors came to the Book Fair organised at the venue of the Congress two Left outlets enjoyed exceptionally high sales.