

INDIAN REPUBLIC'S FIRST PRESIDENT

Warm Greetings To Dr. Rajendra Prasad

SIGNATURES AFFIXED TO CONSTITUTION

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, January 24. .

SPONTANEOUS and thumping cheers burst forth in the Constituent Assembly this morning, when the unanimous election of the 67-year-old peasant Congress leader of the Gandhian school of thought, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, as the first President of the Indian Republic was announced.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, aptly described the event as "a red letter day in the history of India." Nature also seemed to greet the decision as a burst of showers followed it.

The House also carried, amidst scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm, the President's proposal to give equal place to "Jana Gana Mana" and "Vande Mataram" as the national anthem of India.



Dr. Rajendra Prasad

Led by Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister, the 271 members present in the House attested their signatures in three specially-bound calligraphed English and Hindi copies of the Constitution, consisting of 395 Articles and eight Schedules, which they took two years, eleven months and eighteen days to complete.

The eventful meeting of the House was preceded by a group photograph being taken with the sitting members of the Constituent Assembly, some of whom were crowded out due to a few enthusiastic members of the future Republican Parliament taking their place.

Members turned out in colourful costumes, the Maharajahdiraja of Dharbanga being prominent with his tall, yellow turban. There was the spirit of the spring, *vasant panchami* having been celebrated only yesterday. Galleries were crowded, while below a larger number of members was present to affix their signatures to the new Constitution than at any time during the drafting stage.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

There was a pin-drop silence as the President commenced the proceedings with his statement on the national anthem. Cheers greeted his observation that for official purposes *Jana Gana Mana* would be used, while the protagonists of *Vande Mataram* applauded later as Dr. Rajendra Prasad announced that this national song would also have an equal status as the national anthem.

Mr. H. V. R. Iyengar, Secretary of the Constituent Assembly and the Returning Officer, proceeded to the microphone to announce the Presidential election result. No sooner he mentioned that the only nomination was that of Dr. Rajendra Prasad than a thumping applause broke out from members, who continuously cheered until the Returning Officer completed his statement on unanimous election.

Springing to his feet, Pandit Nehru rushed to offer his congratulations to Dr. Rajendra Prasad on his election to the high office and pledged his loyalty to the Republic. Hailing Dr. Prasad as a soldier of India, who had ever been in the forefront of India's struggle for freedom, Pandit Nehru observed that in the more arduous tasks awaiting them they could take comfort in the thought that they had as the head of the Republic such a leader of sagacity, sympathy and statesmanship.

SARDAR PATEL'S PRAISE

Sardar Patel thanked Providence for restoring Dr. Prasad to good health so that he could continue to help the country in the stormy times ahead. He felt that the nation had rightly conferred the honour and prestige of the country would rise as days went by under Dr. Prasad's stewardship.

Dr. H. C. Mukherjee, on behalf of the Indian Christian community, Mr. Hussain Imam, claiming to represent Bihar instead of the Muslims of India, and Mr. V. Muniswamy Pillai, as the leader of the Depressed Classes and of Tamil Nad, eulogised the President.

Despite the President's request to members not to embarrass him further by words of praise, Seth Govind Das attempted to speak in Hindi, but he was forced to resume his seat by protests from all parts of the House.

DR. PRASAD'S REPLY

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, choking with emotion, underlined the solemnity of the occasion and said that the country had placed on him a very great responsibility. Recalling an episode from Mahabharat, in which Arjun was forced to hear praises from others by Lord Krishna for saving him from committing *hara kiri*, Dr. Prasad said that he was in a similar unenviable position. He could not, however, resist the temptation of reciprocating the sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr. Prasad pointed out that the tasks ahead, which were quite different from what they used to be in the past, demanded greater devotion, sacrifice and application and hoped that the country would throw out men and women who would be able to fulfil the highest aspirations of the Indian people.

He said that the time for congratulating him was not when he was appointed but when he would retire—then only it would be possible to assess whether he deserved the confidence and goodwill showered on him.

After the President had received copies of the translation of the Con-

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DR. PRASAD AUTOGRAPHS COPIES OF CONSTITUTION

Houses Adjourned

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stitution from Mr. G. S. Gupta, Chairman of the Experts Committee, members one after another, led by Pandit Nehru, affixed their signatures on the calligraphed copies of the Constitution. The signing by members, including the President, occupied nearly two hours.

Mr. N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and Mr. Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, among others, signed the Hindi copy of the Constitution in Devanagari.

The President, while the signing was in progress, obliged quite a number of members who wished to treasure his autograph on their personal copies of the Constitution. Dr. Rajendra Prasad obliged even some of the "chaprasis" with equal readiness.

Today's proceedings came to a close appropriately with the singing of both "Jana Cana Mana" and "Vande Mataram," Mrs. Poornima Bannerji sang the former and Pandit Lakshmi Kant Maitra the latter. Mr. Anantasayanam Aiyangar called "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai" and Rashtrapati "Dr. Rajendra Prasad-ki-Jai" as the Assembly dispersed after the President declared that the House stood "adjourned sine die."

"P.T.I." adds: Among those who did not sign the copies today were Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Seth Damodar Swarup, the only Socialist member of the Assembly, and Sardar Hukam Singh, the Akali leader.

Three new members took their seat in the Constituent Assembly today. They were Mr. Ratnappa Kumbhar and Dr. D. P. Karmarkar, both from Bombay, and Dr. Y. S. Parmar, from Himachal Pradesh.