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Autor: Tytler, Jagdish

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Inaugural Address.

Discours d'ouverture

Eröffnungsansprache

JAGDISH TYTLER

Honourable Minister of State for Surface Transport
Government of India, New Delhi

Distinguished delegates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst the eminent bridge and structural engineers of the world who have assembled here for the 14th Congress of the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering being organised by the Indian National Group of the IABSE under the patronage of Government of India, Ministry of Surface Transport (Roads Wing) and State Governments.

The theme of the congress is "**Civilisation through Civil Engineering**", which aims at highlighting the all embracing nature of civil engineering in shaping and improving the built environment for the benefit of society. From the primitive society to the present industrial age, it is civil engineering technology which is producing the basic infrastructure for development and growth. It is, therefore, very appropriate that the Fourteenth Congress of the IABSE should focus attention on the close relationship between civilisation and engineering.

As we know the United Nations have proclaimed the nineties as the "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" India and many other developing countries are highly prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, land slides, floods, cyclones and tidal waves which cause immense damage to life and property every year. The recent devastating earthquake which rocked the Uttar Kashi region of northern India comes to mind. I am happy to know that eminent structural engineers will investigate in this Congress various ways and means of mitigating such natural disasters so as to reduce loss of life, damage to property and economic and social disruption.

Environmental pollution, thanks to the rapid pace of industrialisation in the world, is another important issue which is of great concern to humanity. Large scale urbanisation, de-forestation, discharge of industrial effluents in the rivers and indiscriminate use of hydrocarbons are some of the harmful effects of industrialisation which are creating ecological imbalance. It is, therefore, appropriate that the Congress will be examining the environmental impact of civil engineering projects and providing suitable guidelines. It is also heartening to know that special emphasis is being given to large scale technical exploitation of renewable energy like solar energy and the contribution that the civil engineer can make to this cause.

A large and efficient highway network is essential for economic development for which we are all striving. Our transportation needs are growing by leaps and bounds and improved technology and quicker methods of construction are required to meet the demand. Bridge structures form a vital part of any road network and their construction maintenance and upkeep are of great importance in keeping the arteries of communication open. For bridging the very wide Indian rivers, specific solutions with long span structures will be required. Apart from this, there will also be very heavy bridging activity in this country in the years to come. I am sure the bridge engineers of this country will make full use of this opportunity to interact with their counterparts from abroad and bring themselves up to date with the latest thinking in these areas.

I note with appreciation the fact that one of the sessions of this congress is being devoted in discussing world trends in financing of projects. This is indeed a very topical subject and I am sure all countries whether developed or developing are facing the same problem of finding enough resources to expand and develop their transportation infrastructure. In this regard the need for going in for new and unconventional sources of financing other than that provided by Government is now quite well recognised. I hope the deliberations in this regard will lead to some practical conclusion which can be immediately put to use for successful implementation of projects.



The Indian National Group of the IABSE, ever since it was set up in 1957, has been playing a leading role as a forum for exchange of ideas and dissemination of the latest technical information regarding bridges and structures. It has been one of the most active National Groups of the IABSE and has been extremely successful in holding many international seminars on very important and topical subjects in structural engineering whose published proceedings have become work of reference for structural engineers of the country. The holding of this 14th Congress of the IABSE in India is indeed a feather in the cap of the Indian National Group. I have no doubt that the group will go from strength to strength in its endeavours to serve the engineering profession in this country.

I am told that this is the first time that the Congress of the IABSE is being held in a developing country in Asia. I am sure that the technical discussions of the congress will not only be stimulating and rewarding but would also be extremely beneficial for the bridge and structural engineers of the country.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the Indian National Group of IABSE for giving me this opportunity to be here today and share my views with you. I wish you a happy stay in this historic city and success in your deliberations.

With these words, I declare this Congress Open.