

Nehru Report (1928)

Under the Act of 1919, new reforms were to be introduced in India by the British Government after every 10 years. For this purpose Simon Commission was sent to India in 1927. Most of the Indian political parties decided to boycott the Commission on the plea that it lacked Indian representation. The British decided to throw the ball in the court of Indian Politicians. Lord Birkendhead, Secretary of State for Indian Affairs, challenged the Indians, “If they have any political capability and competence then they should form a unanimous constitution and present it to us and we will implement it.”

Indian political parties accepted the challenge and called an All Parties Conference at Delhi in January 1928. The conference was attended by around hundred delegates from all the important parties including Indian National Congress, All India Muslim League, National Liberal Federation, Hindu Mahasabha, Central Sikh League etc. The conference failed to reach a conclusion on the issue of the rights of minorities. The second round of the All Parties Conference was held in March the same year. Two sub-committees were formed but the end result was not different from the first session. It was during the third session of the All Parties Conference held at Bombay in May 1928 that a seven members committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to determine the basic features of the future constitution of India.

Despite many hurdles, the Nehru Committee completed its task and its report, commonly known as Nehru Report was presented in the fourth session of the All Parties Conference held in August 1928. The Committee declared that it was useless to ask anything less than complete Swaraj and presented the following demands:

- India should be given Dominion Status with the Parliamentary form of Government.
- There should be a bi-cameral legislature consisting of senate and House of Representatives.
- The senate will comprise of two hundred members elected for seven years, while the House of Representatives should consist of five hundred members elected for five years.
- Governor-General will act on the advice of executive council. It was to be collectively responsible to the parliament.
- There should be Federal form of Government in India with Residuary powers to be vested in Centre.
- There will be no separate electorate for minorities. It claimed “since separate electorate awakens communal sentiments therefore it should be scrapped and joint electorate should be introduced”.
- System of weightage should not be adopted for any province. There will be no reserved seats for communities in Punjab and Bengal. However, reservation of Muslim seats could be possible in the provinces where Muslim population should be at least ten percent.
- Judiciary should be independent from the Executive.
- There should be 1/4th Muslim Representation at Centre.
- Sind should be separated from Bombay provided it proves to be financially self-sufficient.
- Reforms should be introduced in NWFP

The report was not acceptable to Muslims and both the Muslim members of the Committee did not sign it. Syed Ali Imam, due to bad health could not attend the meetings of the Committee while Shoaib Qureshi refused to sign the report. In the fourth

session of the All Parties Conference convened in December to review the Nehru Report, Jinnah representing the Muslim League presented following four amendments in the report:

- There should be no less than one-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature.
- In event of the adult suffrage not being established, Punjab and Bengal should have seats reserved for the Muslims on population basis.
- The form of the constitution should be Federal with residuary powers vested in the provinces.
- Sind should immediately be made a separate province.
- The reforms should also be introduced in NWFP and Balochistan at the earliest.

Jinnah's proposals were rejected when put to vote in All Parties Conference. The Congress managed to get the majority vote in favour of the Report. They asked the Government to make a constitution till December 31 according to the recommendations of Nehru Report and threatened that otherwise the party would start a mass movement for the attainment of Swaraj. It was also decided that January 26 would be celebrated as the Independence Day. Jinnah considered it as the "parting of the ways" and once the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" was now convinced that the Hindu mindset in India was bent upon pushing the Muslim minority to the wall.