

*(Shri Somnath Chatterjee was conducted to the Chair by the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Leader of the House, Shri Pranab Mukherjee and the Leader of the Opposition, Shri L.K. Advani)*

11.29½ hrs.

(MR. SPEAKER (SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE) *in the Chair*)

### FELICITATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

11.30 hrs.

[English]

**THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH)**: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said that in affairs of the State, one should be full of sentiments but never be sentimental. You will forgive me for being somewhat sentimental on this occasion.

Some 50 years ago, when I graduated from my college, your illustrious father presided over the Convocation where I got the degree and today, Sir, when I am going to assume a new office, you are in this illustrious Chair as our guide, friend and philosopher.

Sir, it is a privilege for me to congratulate you and felicitate you on behalf of our Party and on my behalf on your unanimous election as Speaker of this august House.

You, Mr. Speaker Sir, have been an illustrious Member of this august House for over three decades. The Members of the House, quite correctly, showed their appreciation of your vast contribution to the proceedings by conferring on you the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award some years ago, and now by unanimously electing you to this august House as Speaker.

Sir, your life and work as a parliamentarian have been a source of tremendous inspiration for many of us. Like you, I have always believed that politics has to be used as an instrument of social change. To realise this vision, heavy responsibility rests on the Members of this august House and Sir, in you, we have a wise shepherd to guide us. The Members of my party and of the United Progressive Alliance will be with you in your endeavour to improve the quality of debate, discussion and the content of the legislative outcome of our proceedings.

Mr. Speaker Sir, this House reflects the diversity of our vast and plural nation and debates here do reflect the diversity of opinion in our democracy. However, the manner in which our proceedings are conducted and the effectiveness with which we use the time at our disposal to redeem our pledge to the people determine how effectively we can contribute to the holy endeavour of the nation building.

Sir, given your wisdom, given your commitment to our Republic and its ideals, I am sure you will conduct the proceedings of the House in the highest traditions of our great democracy. I assure you, Sir, of my fullest cooperation and indeed of our Alliance and of our Party. I sincerely wish you well, Mr. Speaker Sir, in your responsibility to make the best use of the time at our disposal so that we can deliver on our promises, lighting a lamp in the lives of our people, particularly, the deprived sections of our community. We are committed to taking our nation forward as a modern, progressive, open, secular and liberal democracy and a just society.

Under your guidance, Sir, this House will not disappoint the nation. I sincerely hope that our deliberations will be characterised by reason, compassion and a deep commitment to both efficiency and equity in the processes of governance. We have, Sir, to recapture the high noon of idealism, which inspired our freedom struggle. This idealism is best captured by Rabindra Nath Tagore's famous Poem, and I shall conclude with the prayer that under your distinguished guidance, in our deliberations we live up to the high ideals embodied in that poem :

"Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

I congratulate you, Sir, once again on this occasion.

**THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)**: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I join the Prime Minister in congratulating you on your unanimous election to this august office.

Sir, the first Lok Sabha, under the new Constitution, had the privilege of having your illustrious father as a Member of this House. Since 1971, you are Member of this House and you have contributed very effectively in the deliberations of the House your recognition as one of the outstanding parliamentarians, keeping in view your contributions, speaks the quality of your mind and heart.

Sir, today you have joined the line of illustrious predecessors starting from Shri Vithalbhai Patel to Shri Mavalankar and many others who have not only raised the status of this office but also upheld the dignity, prestige and honour of our Sovereign, Democratic Republic.