

11.10 hrs.

[English]

FELICITATIONS TO DEPUTY-SPEAKER

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH) :

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it gives me a great pleasure to felicitate Shri Charnjit Singh Atwal on his unanimous election to the august office of the Deputy-Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Apart from the great sense of satisfaction of our being able to elect yourself, Sir, as well as the Deputy-Speaker, Shri Atwal unanimously, all of us share in the added pleasure that the deliberations of this House will be guided by such able and distinguished parliamentarians. Shri Atwal had not only presided over the proceedings of the Punjab Legislative Assembly for five years but he had also been an active Member of both the Legislative Assembly and our Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Atwal's long association with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and his active participation in international conferences of parliamentarians and legislatures has given him a truly global vision. Members of this House will benefit enormously from his understanding and appreciation of parliamentary practices and procedures. This House has many first-time Members and they along with all of us will look to senior Members like Shri Atwal for guidance and advice in our collective effort to ensure the smooth functioning of this august House.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I once again compliment Shri Atwal. I also offer him my best wishes along with the assurances of closest cooperation from the United Progressive Alliance, our Party and myself.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I join the hon. Prime Minister in congratulating Shri Charnjit Singh Atwal for adorning the office of Deputy-Speaker of this House. The unanimous elections of the hon. Speaker and of the hon. Deputy-Speaker speak of the maturity of our democracy.

As it has been correctly pointed out, Shri Atwal has a very wide experience Presiding Officer, as he had to handle the Punjab Legislative Assembly as the Speaker. As a Member of this House, he has made his own contribution. In various international parliamentary fora he

has made his presence felt. I have no doubt that on assuming this august office, he will guide the deliberations of the House and he would give his advice and guidance which is needed to a large number of Members, including me, who have been elected to this House for the first time.

Once again I take this opportunity of congratulating him and assuring him of the fullest co-operation from our side.

[Translation]

SHRI L.K. ADVANI (Gandhinagar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, associating myself with the views expressed by the hon. Prime Minister and leader of the House. I extend my hearty congratulations to Shri Charnjit Singh Atwal on his becoming the Deputy Speaker of the House. I think that while electing Shri Atwalji, we have just carried forward the convention laid down in the House prior to his being elected as Deputy Speaker. The Speaker of the House was also elected (unopposed) but there is slight difference between being elected as unopposed and in being elected as unanimously. By unanimously electing you as Speaker and Shri Charnjit Singh Atwalji as Deputy Speaker today we have carried forward this convention. Many elected persons for this post assume the responsibility for the first time in their career but Atwalji is not among them. He has already served as the Speaker of the Punjab Legislative Assembly and it is because of this that he is well versed in running and conducting the business of the House. Earlier he was elected as the Member in the Eighth Lok Sabha from Ropar constituency and this time he has been representing Phillaur constituency. During his last term as MP he had contributed a lot in the Committee set up for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes. I am hopeful that given his sense of commitment and duty for the welfare of the backward sections of society, he would be able to handle his responsibility quite efficiently. I congratulate him, on my own behalf and on the behalf of my party and assure him of our full co-operation.

[English]

SHRIMATI SONIA GANDHI (Raebareli) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me add my words of greetings to Sardar Charnjit Singh Atwal for being elected as the new Deputy-Speaker. The Deputy-Speaker is a senior political personality and has had a distinguished career both in the Punjab Vidhan