

11.16¼ hrs.

FELICITATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Madam Speaker, it is my proud privilege to greet you respectfully on behalf of the Government, and on behalf of our people to the august office of the Speaker to which you have been unanimously elected.

Madam, this, in many ways, is a historic occasion. For the first time a woman Member of this august House has been elected as Speaker and that too a woman belonging to the Dalit community. In electing you to this august office, Madam, we, the Members of Parliament, pay a tribute to the womanhood of our country for the great services, the great contribution that they have made to our nation's life in more than one way.

Madam, on an occasion like this, my mind goes back to the days when your illustrious father Babu Jagjivan Ram was a senior Minister in the Government of India. I had several occasions to interact with him and his wisdom, knowledge and experience were great assets of the Government. You are the embodiment of the same quality of head and heart as late Babuji.

You have a distinguished record of service to our country in more than one way. You have been a distinguished diplomat. You have been a parliamentarian of 25 years or more standing. You have been a Minister in the Government of India and I am sure, this knowledge, wisdom and experience will stand you in good stead in dealing with issues that come before this august House.

Madam, in addition, the charm, the grace and the tact of which you are the embodiment, I am sure, will stand you in good stead in soothing frayed tempers which sometimes happen in this House.

With these words, I congratulate you on your unanimous election as the Speaker. On behalf of our Government, I assure you of our fullest cooperation in discharging your onerous duties.

I once again salute you and congratulate you for your unanimous election to this august House.