

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Hon. Members, before I request the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and other leaders to conduct Shri Manohar Joshi to the Chair, I take this opportunity to heartily congratulate Shri Manohar Joshi on having been elected unanimously to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha. With his election, I feel relieved that the onerous responsibility cast upon me consequent upon the death of Shri G.M.C. Balayogi in running the House has lightened! Nevertheless, I can assure him that he will always have my fullest cooperation as his Deputy in running the House.

It is a creditable achievement in the 50th year of the Indian Parliament that we have elected our Speaker with oneness of opinion.

Sir, you are a first-timer in Parliament. But, you are not new to parliamentary institutions and parliamentary procedures. You have had a long stint in the Maharashtra Legislature holding various positions. This rich experience in the Legislature and the great traditions maintained by your illustrious predecessors will guide you in running the House smoothly.

As I said at the outset, we are celebrating the fiftieth year of our Parliament. This occasion must instill in us a greater resolve to strengthen Parliament. As the Speaker represents the authority of the House and is the repository of its collective wisdom, we all have a common duty to strengthen his hands in upholding that authority and in reflecting that wisdom.

I appeal to all the hon. Members of this House to extend full cooperation to Shri Manohar Joshi as you have all so kindly extended to me while I was discharging the duties of the Speaker. I am grateful to you all for the cooperation shown to me. I wish all the very best to Shri Joshi as the new Speaker of the Thirteenth Lok Sabha.

Now, the hon. Prime Minister, the Leader of the House, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and other leaders may conduct the Speaker to the Chair.

(Shri Manohar Joshi was conducted to the Chair by the Leader of the House, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Leader of the Opposition, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi)

12.11 hrs.

[SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI, MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MR. SPEAKER: *Mitro*, thank you very much for electing me as the Speaker. May I now request the hon. Prime Minister to address the House?

12.12 hrs.

FELICITATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

[*Translation*]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Mr. Speaker, Sir, many congratulations for getting elected to the post of Speaker, Lok Sabha. You have been elected unopposed. A convention has been followed and we have to further strengthen the democratic conventions. It is very essential that conventions should be established alongwith rules and should be followed strictly. You have taken this seat as a Speaker. This seat is a responsible seat, the responsibility and the prestige of the Parliament is in your hands. Your life has always been full of social activities. You have started your social life at the grass root level. You have been closely associated with education but besides education you have also shouldered the responsibilities of a public representative in politics. You were a corporator, you have worked as a Member of Legislative Assembly. You had a chance to serve Legislative Council. You were a Minister in Centre and State and you were also a Chief Minister. You have shouldered the responsibilities of all these posts with great efficiency. Besides, you always endeavoured in the field of education by starting a campaign, particularly in the field of technical education in Maharashtra, that every person of Maharashtra should take technical education and the State should progress in the field of industry and trade. I was told that in Maharashtra wherever there is a bus stand there is a Khinor technical institute. I am not aware whether the institute was opened by keeping in mind the bus stand or the bus stand was made keeping in mind the institute but both have co-existence.

I was told that while performing the official duties of a Chief Minister. You maintained links with the field of education and you had a class room and a black board, where students could study, in the Chief Minister house 'Varsha' and you used to often work there as a teacher. I was told by some one that you are more popularly known as 'Sir'. You were addressed as 'Sir' just because you are a teacher. Today you are adorning the post of Speaker. It is a very prestigious and dignified post, it is as a throne of Vikramaditya, who ever occupies this has to do justice, he has to be neutral and has to run the House as per the Constitution and the rules, keeping this in view you have great responsibilities and we have full faith in you that you will discharge your duties very smoothly. You will always get full support from us in this regard.

Just now Deputy Speaker Sahab has recalled that the golden jubilee celebrations of the Parliament will be celebrated within few days. A programme was organised on 13th May. If you refer to the proceedings of yester years you will find that approximately during these dates only Shri Dada Sahab Mavalankar was elected as the Speaker of Lok Sabha. You are going to take such a post. It is the need of the hour that the conventions are safeguarded, the dignity of this House is increased and the House should run smoothly. As I have already said that I have full faith on whoever occupies this seat because he has to do justice, he will have to be neutral and has to maintain the dignity of this post.

Due to death of Shri Balayogiji you have taken the responsibility to post of Speaker when he became the Speaker for the first time we were rather uncertain regarding how he will be able to take all of us together. How he will manage to run this House but the way he carried out his duties as a Speaker elevated his stature for that every one remembers him and he will be remembered as a good Speaker. You are having the same reputation as he had. I am fully confident that the House will run smoothly under your guidance. The House will run smoothly and in a disciplined manner under your guidance. Wherever any lacuna is observed you will be putting efforts to settle it by taking the suggestions of one and all.

After the death of Shri Balayogi as a Deputy Speaker Shri Sayyed Sahab took over the charge and performed the duties efficiently. I whole heartedly appreciate him. Today is his birthday that is why may happy returns of the day to him. Today in the morning, when I telephoned him and conveyed my good wishes to him, he said whatever I have done it is just because of your cooperation. He ran the House efficiently in very odd situations. Now a new Speaker has been elected and he will put efforts to brave such situations. No doubt that we will be able to overcome any sort of crisis with the cooperation of one and all.

I want to congratulate Shri Sayeed Sahab and wish to welcome you also. You have been given a great responsibility. May God give you strength to carry out these responsibilities.

[English]

SHRIMATI SONIA GANDHI (Amethi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Congress Party and on my own behalf I join the hon. Prime Minister in offering our congratulations and felicitations to you on your election as the Speaker.

Sir, the greatest achievement of independent India is the democratic system that we have established and nurtured. Parliament is the symbol of this democracy. It is the nation's most important institution which guards our freedom and strengthens our polity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a great responsibility devolves upon you for maintaining the highest traditions of our Parliament. You have seen public life at various levels. With your great experience, I am sure, you will not find it difficult to do justice to all public issues and to all sections of the House. This House reflects not only the entire spectrum of political opinion but also our country's diversity. The eminent Speakers of this House starting from Shri Mavalankar have established great traditions. They, on many occasions, not only represented the entire House but also the voice of the people of India. Sir, we look up to you to uphold this time-honoured tradition.

Sir, we, on our part, will extend our full co-operation to you in the discharge of your onerous responsibilities. I also take this opportunity to join the hon. Prime Minister to wish our Deputy-Speaker a happy birthday today.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of my Party and my behalf I felicitate you on your assumption of one of the highest offices of this great country and I wish you well. I also offer my special felicitations to our very dear Deputy-Speaker on his birthday.

The country is passing through trying times; let us not deny that. The very basis of our democratic functioning is under question. There are serious economic issues, serious social issues, which are creating tension within the country. Over and above that there is tension within the country about the country's future, integrity and unity. There are forces that are trying to destabilise the country. All these important issues are casting their shadows within the House itself, as they have to. As Members of the Opposition, we shall be raising these issues from time to time. I am sure, considering the importance of the issues, you will give us adequate opportunity to raise them in tune with the sentiments of the Opposition.

For the last two days, I do not know how much our astute Minister for Parliamentary Affairs had maneuvered it, a lot of unnecessary controversy has been going on as to whether your election is uncontested or unanimous...(Interruptions) Today, you are the Speaker of the House. Why doubts have been raised, everybody in the country knows. It is because of your political association, because of your political affiliation, because