

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE UNVEILING OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF
THE PRESIDENTS OF THE CENTRAL LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY AND THE PORTRAITS OF THE FORMER
SPEAKERS OF THE LOK SABHA**

New Delhi: February 10, 2014

1. I am indeed happy to be present amidst you on the occasion of unveiling of the photographs of the Presidents of the Central Legislative Assembly and the portraits of the former Speakers of the Lok Sabha today. As Presiding Officers of our apex elected body, these distinguished personalities made significant contributions towards strengthening the edifice of our parliamentary democracy through their innovative rulings, directions, observations and initiatives. As a mark of our respect to these stalwarts, their photographs and portraits have been installed today in this temple of democracy.

2. Indian Parliament is the *Gangotri* of our democracy. It represents the will and the aspirations of one billion plus people and is the link between the people and the government. If Gangotri gets polluted, neither Ganga nor any of its tributaries can stay unpolluted. It is incumbent upon all Parliamentarians that they maintain the highest standards of democracy and parliamentary functioning. The Parliament, like other organs of the Government, is not sovereign and owes its origin and authority to the Constitution and derives its functional responsibility from, and discharges its responsibilities within the framework of the Constitution. The prime function of the Parliament is to enact legislations to empower the people on every front - social, economic and political, to exercise control over Executive and making it accountable in all respects. The validity of a law, whether Union or State, is tested by judiciary as defined in the Constitution.

3. Our Parliament has evolved well-developed processes and procedures. The Parliament functions through Debate, Dissension and finally Decision and not through disruption. In order to strengthen our Parliamentary functioning and other democratic institutions, it is important that all stakeholders – Government, political parties, their leaders and Parliamentarians do some introspection and follow sound parliamentary conventions and rules.
4. This historical Parliament House Building is adorned with mural paintings of ancient India along with portraits and statues of national leaders and eminent parliamentarians. Presently, the photographs of Presiding Officers of Central Legislative Assembly of pre-independence period have been displayed in the inner lobby of Lok Sabha Chamber in the Parliament House. In order to continue this beautiful tradition, it was appropriately decided to have a Gallery of the Presidents of the Central Legislative Assembly and the former Speakers of the Lok Sabha and to install their photographs and portraits in the Outer Lobby of the Lok Sabha Chamber. I congratulate the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smt. Meira Kumar, for taking this initiative. I also convey my appreciation for the selected artists who have done a tremendous job in painting the portraits.
5. In the last six decades and more since Independence, the people of this country have been witness to the constitution of fifteen Lok Sabhas through election on the basis of adult suffrage. Every Lok Sabha, as an apex elected body of the country, has successfully guided our nation on the path of progress. In response to the unique circumstances every Lok Sabha has faced, the Parliament has evolved as an effective representative institution to meet the emerging challenges of our vibrant democracy. By facilitating orderly conduct of business in the House, all the former Speakers of the Lok Sabha have significantly contributed to the effective functioning of the House and to the development of various parliamentary traditions, conventions, processes and procedures.

6. This is also the time to remember the distinguished Presidents of the Central Legislative Assembly in the pre-Independence period – Sir Frederick Whyte, Shri Vithalbhai Patel, Sir Muhammad Yakub, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola, Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and Sir Abdur Rahim, who laid the solid foundation for India's parliamentary system.
7. Due to the relentless efforts of Shri Vithalbhai Patel, the first elected President of the Central Legislative Assembly and contributions of members like Motilal Nehru and others, the establishment of an independent Secretariat under the President of the Central Legislative Assembly was a turning point in the history of our parliamentary system. It was due to his farsightedness and wisdom that when the Constituent Assembly was drafting the Constitution, the founding fathers took cognizance of the importance of having an independent office of the Presiding Officer. They very thoughtfully and appropriately incorporated Article 98 in our Constitution which provided for the creation of separate Secretariats for both the Houses of our Parliament.
8. As the constitutional and functional head of the House, the Speaker is entrusted with the onerous responsibility of protecting the independence, impartiality, dignity and power of the House. Adequate powers are vested in the office of the Speaker through the Constitution, through the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House and also through the conventions to ensure smooth conduct of the parliamentary proceedings. All our distinguished former Speakers of the Lok Sabha, starting from Shri G. V. Mavalankar to Shri Somnath Chatterjee; and the present Speaker, Smt. Meira Kumar, have adorned the Office of the Speaker maintaining the highest standards of democratic traditions and have made significant contributions in further strengthening our parliamentary conventions, processes and procedures. I am delighted to see presence of some of former speakers of Lok Sabha on this occasion and I heartily welcome them.

9. I am sure, the photographs and portraits of the Presiding Officers of the Central Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha that are being unveiled here today will always remind us of discharging our duties and responsibilities for which we have sought mandate from the people, and inspire us to earnestly strive to establish a progressive, vibrant and healthy democracy.

Thank You.

Jai Hind.
