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PAPER CLIPPINGS

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ: DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT:

ಸಂಸತ್ತು

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER :

Times of India

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 20/06/2019

Birla elected LS Speaker unanimously

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

20/6/19

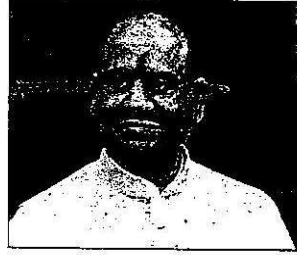
New Delhi: BJP leader and NDA nominee Om Birla was on Wednesday unanimously elected Lok Sabha Speaker with opposition parties, including Congress and Trinamool Congress, supporting him even as PM Narendra Modi said Birla's elevation signalled the days of "hard core" politics are passing.

The second term MP from Kota in Rajasthan succeeds BJP veteran Sumitra Mahajan who did not contest the Lok Sabha election. Opposition leaders supported his candidature urging him to be impartial as presiding officer of the House while PM Narendra Modi drew attention to Birla's background of social work.

The PM, who as leader of the House, moved a motion for Birla's election, said, "The days of hard core politics are gradually getting over." He underlined that a record of social service in political life is getting wider acceptance in society. Birla, while relatively junior in Parliament, has been a three-term MLA and is not a political novice.

Modi also praised the new Speaker for turning Kota into a "Kashi (hub) of education", saying this small town of Rajasthan has become a sort of small country and its transformation has taken place under Birla's leadership.

Congress leader Adhir Ran-



Opposition leaders supported Om Birla's candidature and urged him to be impartial

jan Chowdhury, who along with BJD's Pinaki Mishra, DMK's T R Baalu and TMC's Sudip Bandyopadhyay backed Birla, said the presiding officer is the custodian of the House, which according to Jawaharlal Nehru, represents the nation and freedom of the country.

Referring to the practice during previous Lok Sabha, he expressed concern over very few bills being referred to standing committees by the lower House and urged the new Speaker to reverse the trend. BJD's Pinaki Mishra said Birla's unopposed election shows his acceptability.

A surprise choice, the 56-year-old Birla, assured the members that he will run the House in an impartial manner and everyone will be heard. Here, we should raise the issues which matter to the last person standing in the row," he said.

The motion moved by the PM was adopted by voice vote. A total of 13 motions were moved in Birla's support.