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Nitish to take oath as Bihar Chief Minister again today

Tarkishore Prasad elected BJP legislature party leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

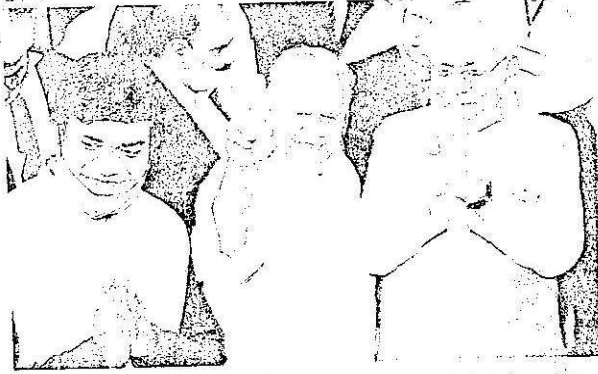
Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar was elected leader of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) legislature party in Bihar on Sunday. He will take oath as Chief Minister of the State for the fourth consecutive term on Monday.

Four-time MLA from Kati-har Tarkishore Prasad was elected leader of the BJP legislature party and Renu Devi, MLA from Bettiah in West Champaran, his deputy.

Mr. Prasad, 64, is tipped to be the next Deputy Chief Minister, replacing long-time incumbent Sushil Kumar Modi.

Mr. Kumar was elected unanimously at the meeting held at 1 Anne Marg, official residence of the CM. Senior BJP leader and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, party's poll in-charge Devendra Fadnavis and State party in-charge Bhupendra Yadav were present.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Kumar, accompanied by leaders of all the four alliance partners, met Governor Fagu Chauhan at the Raj Bhavan and staked claim to form the new government. "The Governor accepted our request. Tomorrow the oath taking ceremony will be held between 4 and 4.30 p.m.,"



Back in the saddle: Nitish Kumar and other NDA leaders after meeting Governor Fagu Chauhan in Patna on Sunday. *PTI

Mr. Kumar said.

After the NDA legislators' meeting, BJP leaders headed to the State guest house. Mr. Modi, Mr. Singh, Mr. Fadnavis and Mr. Yadav were closeted in another meeting before they went to meet the Governor. The leaders avoided a direct answer to a question about the next Deputy Chief Minister. "You all will know at an appropriate time," said Mr. Singh.

Mr. Modi, who is known to be close to Mr. Kumar, later tweeted that no one could "snatch" the position of party worker from him. "In my political career spanning 40 years, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar (RSS) have given me much more than anyone will ever get. I will discharge whatever responsibility is given to me," said

the tweet in Hindi.

Meanwhile, the buzz in political circles is that Mr. Modi may be inducted into the Union Cabinet through a Rajya Sabha seat, vacant after the demise of Lok Janshakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan.

"Hon'ble Sushil ji, you are a leader and held the post of Deputy CM... you will be a leader of the BJP in future too. No one becomes small or big through a post," tweeted Union Minister Giriraj Singh.

The NDA, which comprises the BJP, the JD(U), the Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular and the Vikasheel Insaan Party won 125 seats in the 243-member Assembly: The BJP won 74 seats and the JD(U) 43. HAM-S and VIP won four seats each.