

'Symbol of loyalty' who has stood by party through thick & thin

**BHARAT BHUSHAN
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'You don't earn loyalty in a day but earn it day by day'. This quote fits well in the case of Rattan Lal Gupta - a seasoned statesman and old respected J&K politician. While holding vital positions in the ruling National Conference, he has always maintained a low-profile & kept the party moving forward. It would be appropriate to call him a real foot soldier of his party.

He joined NC exactly half-a-century ago in 1976, and was MLC from 1981 to 1986. Since then, he has served the party even during the most crucial times.

In an informal chat with this scribe, he spoke on how he had nurtured the party moment by moment

for the past 50 years.

His party colleagues & close acquaintances also speak very high of him, and proudly call him the 'symbol of loyalty' who has stood by the party through thick & thin. And, it's right too because when 'key' NC cadres defected to a rival party over two years or so back before J&K elections, he had remained steadfast and stood by his values.

As days passed, reports emerged that some more party leaders could switch loyalties to the other party. The NC high-command then chose Gupta and gave him the responsibility of provincial head. He came true to the party's expectations and worked hard to keep the flock together.

Asked if the party's command in Jammu province was in safe hands now,



Gupta said, "Only party knows better about it." "My job is to work for the party, and I am doing it with absolute dedication & sincerity," he added.

On the issue of statehood to J&K, the NC provincial head regretted that the central government had not come true to its commitment. "Despite repeated

assurances, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are yet to restore statehood to the erstwhile J&K state," he said.

Jammu & Kashmir was bifurcated into the UTs of J&K and Ladakh in 2019 when the Centre had also scrapped Art 370.

"Under the present setup, the chief minister has been virtually demoted, and the administration has been stripped of many of the powers which a democratically elected government enjoys," Gupta said.

"Governance problem is a major issue. Every file moves through administrative secretaries and they are not under the chief minister. Just imagine, how hard it is to move on under a situation like this," he added.

"We want J&K's original statehood status to be re-

stored. For it, the party leadership held a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi last month. This struggle will continue till the statehood is restored," he said.

Ever since the government formation, some NC ministers have been accused of ignoring the party workers/civil society members who approach them for the resolution of genuine public problems. When Gupta's attention was drawn towards this issue, he replied in the affirmative but said this problem was mainly linked to the UT status of J&K as ministers were also helpless in some cases.

He said this issue was also raised in the party's Dachigam Summit, where the party high-command had explained the reasons to the party cadres.

Japan Earthquake Death toll rises to 38, thousands still in relief shelters

TOKYO, Aug 2: The death toll from the powerful earthquake that struck Japan's southwestern Kumamoto Prefecture last week has risen to 38, while thousands of people continue to take shelter in relief camps.

According to a report by Japan's public broadcaster NHK on Sunday, authorities have confirmed 36 deaths so far, while two other fatalities are being investigated to determine whether they were caused by the 7.1-magnitude earthquake that struck last Tuesday.

More than 9,200 people are currently staying in 210 evacuation centres following the quake. Over 3,400 houses have been damaged, while water supply remains disrupted in more than 69,000 homes and business establishments across Kumamoto.

Medical facilities affected by the earthquake are gradually working to restore normal services.

Authorities said around 30 people were taken to hospitals on Saturday with symptoms linked to heatstroke due to extreme temperatures. Some areas of Kumamoto recorded temperatures above 37 degrees Celsius.

The administration said a complete assessment of the damage is yet to be completed, and the number of damaged buildings could rise as inspections continue.

The prefectural government said search and rescue operations at an Aeon shopping mall, which was hit by an explosion shortly after the earthquake, concluded on Saturday. Seven employees were killed in the incident, while five others were injured.

Japan is located in the Pacific Ocean's "Ring of Fire" region, where around 20 per cent of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 or higher are recorded.

Rajouri Youth begin PM's 100-week 'Nasha Mukh Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyaan'

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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District Rajouri marked the launch of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's 100-Week "Nasha Mukh Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyaan" with a solemn and inspiring tribute to the martyrs, reaffirming the resolve of the district's youth to build a strong, disciplined and drug-free India.

Following the Prime Minister's virtual address inaugurating the nationwide campaign, My Bharat volunteers assembled at the Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa Memorial Museum & Library, a unique memorial dedicated to the Operation Sindoor, the Shaurya of the Indian Armed Forces and the extraordinary resilience of the people of Rajouri.

The Memorial Museum & Library, inaugurated by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir in April 2026, has been established as a living tribute to the supreme sacrifice of Martyr Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, who laid down his life while serving the people during Operation Sindoor. More than a memorial, it preserves the inspiring story of Operation Sindoor, honours the courage and valour of the Indian Army Security Forces & District Administration.

The Museum and Library chronicles the unwavering



spirit, courage and resilience displayed by the people of Rajouri in the face of cross-border shelling and adversity. The memorial stands today as a symbol of patriotism, public service and the unbreakable bond between the Armed Forces, Civil Administration and the citizens of this border district.

Standing before this symbol of sacrifice and national pride, the volunteers paid homage to the martyrs and drew inspiration from the values of courage, selfless service and dedication to the nation. They resolved to carry these ideals into their own lives by becoming ambassadors of a Nasha Mukh

Bharat and active participants in the Prime Minister's 100-week Nasha Mukh Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp'.

The volunteers pledged to reach every section of society through awareness campaigns, youth engagement, educational institutions and community participation, working closely with local stakeholders to eliminate the menace of drug abuse and strengthen the moral fabric of society. They affirmed that protecting the nation is not only the responsibility of those who guard its borders but also of every citizen who safeguards its youth from the scourge of narcotics.

The District Administration expressed confidence that commencing this historic campaign from the Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa Memorial Museum & Library would imbue the movement with a deeper sense of purpose. By drawing inspiration from the martyrs of Operation Sindoor, the heroism of the Indian Armed Forces and the resilience of the people of Rajouri, the youth of the district have transformed the Prime Minister's call into a solemn pledge of service, patriotism and nation-building, taking a decisive step towards realizing the vision of a Nasha Mukh Yuva for a Viksit Bharat.

Dr Ritu Singh facilitates 'Vridhhi - The Digital Beti' for empowering girl child through digital literacy

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, AUG 02**

A special facilitation ceremony was organised to recognize the remarkable contribution of 'Vridhhi - The Digital Beti', a pioneering initiative conceptualised by Kunwari Dr. Ritu Singh under the Ashok Kapur Foundation in collaboration with NIIT, New Delhi to facilitate the third batch of 25 girls from villages surrounding Marh block at Hotel Hari Niwas, Jammu in the presence of Ms. Anjali Khosla, Ms. Nandita Baig from New Delhi along with Mr. R K Verma, Principal DPS Nagbani. The girls were trained by Mr. Rohit Charak a computer instructor of DPS Nagbani. The initiative has emerged as a beacon of hope for empowering young girls by equipping them with essential digital skills and preparing them to become confident, self-reliant citizens of tomorrow.

The programme aims to bridge the digital divide by providing quality digital education, computer literacy, and technology-based learning opportunities to girls, particularly from underserved communities. The initiative has established digital learning facilities to ensure that every girl has access to the knowledge and skills required in the 21st century.

During the felicitation



ceremony, the visionary leadership of Kunwari Dr. Ritu Singh was widely appreciated. Her unwavering commitment towards women's empowerment and inclusive education has enabled hundreds of girls to embrace technology as a tool for learning, innovation, and self-development. The dignitaries present lauded the Ashok Kapur Foundation in collaboration with NIIT, New Delhi for their sustained efforts

in promoting equitable access to digital education and creating meaningful opportunities for girls to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world.

Expressing her gratitude, Kunwari Dr. Ritu Singh reaffirmed her commitment to expanding the reach of the initiative and ensuring that more young girls benefit from digital education, skill development, and holistic empowerment. She reiterated that

investing in the education and digital capability of girls is an investment in the nation's future. She also announced that the Foundation will soon launch an in-house training programme for marginalized sections of the society. The initiative aims to equip participants with relevant skills, enhance their employability, and makes them job-ready, thereby fostering greater social and economic inclusion.

Pak Hindu rights body demands implementation of constitutional guarantees for minorities

PESHAWAR, AUG 2: A Hindu rights organisation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced to launch an outreach campaign to urge the provincial government to ensure implementation of constitutional guarantees for the protection of the minorities.

Prominent minority rights activist Haroon Sarab Dayal, unanimously elected as the president of the All Balmik Hindu Community Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (ABHCKP) on Saturday, also said the community continued to face challenges related to legal protection and equal opportunities and called the government to ensure minority protection mechanisms.

Dayal, 55, serves as a member of the Pakistan Hindu Temple Management Committee under the federal Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The ABHCKP, a more than a decade old body, held a provincial consultative meeting on Saturday in Kohat district and discussed the challenges facing the Balmik Hindu community in the province and also a future roadmap for its welfare and constitutional rights.

The meeting brought together repre-

sentatives from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including community elders (Sarpanchs), local presidents of Balmik Sabhas, Hindu priests and religious scholars, lawyers, social activists, government officials, educationists, teachers, businesspersons and youth representatives.

Participants discussed constitutional safeguards, legal reforms, social inclusion and measures to strengthen the community, Dayal, the ABHCKP president told PTI. Addressing the gathering, Dayal said the Balmik Hindu community, like many other vulnerable minority communities in Pakistan, continued to face challenges relating to legal protection, civil registration, education and equal opportunities.

He announced the launch of a province-wide outreach campaign and the formation of a provincial cabinet, with priorities including youth and women's leadership, improved access to legal documentation such as birth registration, marriage registration, national identity cards and inheritance rights, policy advocacy with provincial and federal institutions, and the promotion of interfaith harmony through edu-

cation and media.

Dayal, widely known for his work on human rights, interfaith harmony and the protection of minority rights, is a founding member of the Pakistan Council of World Religions (PCWR) and a leading member of the National Lobbying Delegation for Minority Rights.

The community also urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to ensure full implementation of constitutional guarantees relating to fundamental rights and the protection of minorities, Dayal said.

He called upon the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure implementation of Article 9, 10, 20, 25, 27 and 36 of the Constitution of Pakistan, all pertaining to minority and human rights. He also called on the federal government and Parliament to expedite minority personal laws and protection mechanisms, while appealing to national and international human rights organisations, UN agencies, diplomatic missions and civil society to support the empowerment and protection of vulnerable minority communities in Pakistan.

Curfew relaxed in southern Nepal as situation improves after communal clashes

KATHMANDU, AUG 2:

Nepalese authorities on Sunday relaxed the curfew imposed in various parts of Madhesh Province in southern Nepal and Koshi Province in eastern Nepal as the security situation improves days after communal violence rocked the region.

Three people have been killed in communal violence in Nepal

that started after clashes erupted in Sunsari district bordering India in Koshi Province, prompting authorities to impose curfews, prohibitory orders and step up security deployment.

The violence broke out after members of the two communities, who were holding separate programmes, clashed over the use of loudspeakers and the display of religious flags on July 26. The violence soon



spread to neighbouring areas.

Authorities said that two people were killed in Sunsari district and one in Siraha district.

The curfew has been removed, and only prohibitory orders are in effect in two areas of Saptari district, including Rajbiraj Municipality, taking into consideration the improved security situation, said Naresh Kumar Yadav, assistant chief district officer of Saptari district.

Similarly, in Dhanusha, curfew orders have been withdrawn effective from Saturday while prohibitory orders have been issued in a few places after improvement in the security situation.

In Parsa district, prohibitory orders have been issued only for the night. However, public meetings and assembly of more than four people from 5 pm to 6 am in parts of Birgunj Metropolitan City were not allowed, according to a no-

tice issued by the district administration office, Parsa.

In Siraha, curfew has been removed in some parts while it has been relaxed in some areas, according to a notice issued by the district administration office in Siraha.

Meanwhile, peace rallies have been organised in various parts of Madhesh Province aimed at maintaining religious harmony, unity and brotherhood among different communities. In a related development, at the initiative of Home Minister AÂ Sudhan Gurung, a 13-point agreement has been reached between the government and a religious group in Janakpur in Dhanusha on Sunday for maintaining harmony, unity and ending their proposed protest programme. (PTI)