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# Tirath Singh Rawat is new CM of Uttarakhand

A long-time BJP member, he was the dark horse for the post

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NEW DELHI

Garhwal MP Tirath Singh Rawat on Wednesday took oath as the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand at the Raj Bhavan in Dehradun after the BJP Legislature Party elected him its leader. His predecessor, Trivendra Singh Rawat, resigned on Tuesday.

The meeting of the BJP Legislature Party was held under the supervision of the party's central observers - former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh and Rajya Sabha member Dushyant Gautam.

## U.P. to Uttarakhand

Mr. Tirath, 57, who was the Uttarakhand BJP chief from 2013 to 2015, was a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, before the creation of Uttarakhand, during the period 1997-2002.

He was an MLA in Uttarakhand from 2012 to 2017, and previously held the post of Education Minister from 2000 to 2002.

Speaking to presspersons, he thanked legislators and party leaders for the opportunity. He asserted that he would "carry forward the work done by former Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat".

A long-time member of the BJP, Mr. Tirath was the dark horse for the Chief Mi-



Taking over: Uttarakhand CM Tirath Singh Rawat, left, with his predecessor, Trivendra Singh Rawat, in Dehradun. -PTI

nister's post, where the only thing clear was that the choice would devolve on a person from the Rajput community.

## Low-profile person

A low-profile person, Mr. Tirath is considered close to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and was his close aide during the latter's *vistarak* programme of organisational strengthening in 2016-17 held over 120 days.

"In 2017, he was prevented from getting ticket by a camp led by his predecessor after which Mr. Shah appointed him national secretary with the charge of han-

dling party affairs in Himachal Pradesh. He was also given the prestigious Garhwal seat to contest from in the Lok Sabha polls, a sign that the central leadership felt he had been cheated out of Assembly ticket. He is the kind of man who doesn't have an entourage of staff and most often answers his own phone," a senior leader said. It is being hoped that this more low-key, amiable appointment would heal some of the ruptures within the State unit, which caused a revolt against Mr. Trivendra Singh Rawat.

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Sources said that one of the first things that the new Chief Minister has been tasked to do by the party's central leadership is to roll back two unpopular decisions of his predecessor—that of the Chardham Devasthanam Management Board Act that sought to extend the government control over 51 Hindu shrines, including Badrinath and Kedarnath, sparking massive protests by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu outfits, and that of the setting up of the Gairsain

Commissionerate, amalgamating Almora from Kumaon, and the Badrinath and Kedarnath sub-divisions from Garhwal, again sparking massive resentment.

Uttarakhand will go to the polls in February next and while it is late in the day to be changing leadership in the State, the BJP is hoping that people may instead take the change as a sign that the party is responsive to public criticism of its leaders and had taken action.