

'Give Yogi 6 months before judging his performance'

Governor **Ram Naik** may have been a strong contender for NDA's presidential nominee but has no regrets in not having made it and is happy that Ram Nath Kovind, his junior in politics and a member of BJP's disciplinary committee when Naik was national president, was chosen. About to complete three years as Governor on July 22, Naik spoke to **TOI** about his tenure at Raj Bhawan. Excerpts from the interview...

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Your three years in Raj Bhawan have been tumultuous. How do you feel now, while looking back?

■ I simply discharged my constitutional duties in the interest of the state and citizens. Guarding the constitution is my responsibility and I would continue to do so.

What were your challenging moments, where you felt you had to take firm decisions?

■ I feel, the way I stood firmly in rejecting tainted names from the list drawn up by the then Samajwadi Party government for the Legislative Council, was one such decision. I succeeded in making the government follow the letter and spirit of the Constitution. I feel satisfied that I could change the past tradition of putting stamp of approval on decisions of the state government without scrutinising them according to constitutional norms. Another big decision was to stand my ground firmly on the appointment of Lokayukta. Both the decisions were unprecedented.

You were often criticised by the Samajwadi Party for your harsh decisions ...

■ I seldom respond to political charge-



As strong winds lashed the city on Wednesday, a tree near gate number 2 of Raj Bhawan fell, taking down with it the boundary wall. Governor Ram Naik ordered for the tree to be removed so that traffic was restored on the busy road

es made on the Raj Bhawan. But, on a few occasions, I sought clarification from senior leader of the Samajwadi party, Ram Gopal Yadav and he regretted making these his accusations.

You had a running feud with senior SP leader Azam Khan ...

■ Everybody knows that if Azam Khan criticizes someone, it is seen as a certificate of honesty and integrity.

“ In the first three months, chief minister Yogi has shown determination to take long term decisions. The adage, well begun is half done, applies to him

It seems you are soft on present chief minister Aditya Nath Yogi, while you were unsparing on former CM Akhilesh Yadav ...

■ To assess his performance, we need to give Aditya Nath Yogi at least six months. In the first three months, Yogi has shown determination and commitment to take long term decisions. The adage, well begun is half done, applies to him. I still have cordial relations with Akhilesh Yadav. But he had to pay a heavy price when I pointed out certain anomalies and he ignored. For example, when I asked for a White Paper in the Jawahar Bagh massacre case, he did not respond. There are many such decisions.

I recall an anecdote while talking about Akhilesh. While addressing a meeting of young leaders of his party, Akhilesh asked them to read my book 'Charaiveti, Chairaveti', especially the part where I had written that despite my loss to actor Govinda during a Lok Sabha election, I did not stop my struggle and public welfare work in my constituency.

You often objected to the law and order situation in the Akhilesh government, but you are somehow quiet now even as crime is spiralling ...

■ I would reiterate that the new chief minister should be given at least six months to perform, before being put under scrutiny.

Your followers regret that your name did not figure for the post of President and a junior was chosen ...

■ I have no regrets. Rather, I am more than happy that my colleague, who has worked with me in my committees in the party, has been elevated to the highest position. I never ask for anything, just keep working with honesty and sincerity for the nation and for the welfare of the people.

What do you intend to do in the remaining part of tenure here?

■ When I came to Raj Bhawan here three years ago, I had dreamt of turning Uttar Pradesh into "uttam pradesh." Now, in the days to come, I want to see it as "sarvottam Pradesh" (the best state in the country).