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CHITRAKOOT: Sangh Parivar veteran and the former Rajya Sabha member, Nanaji Deshmukh, passed away here on Saturday at the age of 94. He breathed his last at the premises of India's first rural university that he established in this temple town bordering Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, his close associate Sharda Prasad Dwivedi said. Mr. Deshmukh was unwell for some time due to age-related ailments and had refused to be taken to Delhi for treatment.

The Padma Vibhushan awardee had donated his body for medical research, Born in Kadoli in Maharashtra's Parbhani district on October 11, 1916, Mr. Deshmukh founded the Deendayal Research Institute here and was credited with exemplary work in education, health and rural self-reliance.

He was also instrumental in carring out a social restructuring programme in over 500 villages in both the States. Mr. Deshmukh established the Chitrakoot Gramodva Vishwavidyalaya here - the country's first rural university - and was its chancellor. Senior BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee said Nanaji was an expert at handling challenges and was a dedicated social worker, lifelong pracharak of the RSS, senior politician and a visionary.

"He was an expert in handling challenges. There was a magnetic attraction in his personality and whoever came in touch with him remained with him throughout," Mr. Vajpayee said, adding: "By voluntarily disassociating himself from politics, he became a role model...his death is a loss to society and me personally." BJP president Nitin Gadkari also condoled Mr. Deshmukh's death. "Nanaji was one of the modern rishis of India. One of the early architects of the Jan Sangh, Nanaji firmly stood for true value based politics. He could rightly be described as idealism personified," Mr. Gadkari said.

He said Mr. Deshmukh's courage of conviction was so strong that he left active politics when he was almost at the pinnacle. Senior leader L.K. Advani said he would not celebrate Holi or any other festivities related to it as a mark of respect to the deceased leader.

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley, in his condolence message, said: "In the death of Nanaji, India has lost an elder statesman, a patriot, and a role model." The Vishwa Hindu Parish- ad and the RSS also condoled his death. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat condoled Mr. Deshmukh's death on behalf of the Sangh. Mr. Deshmukh's body be flown to Delhi from Chitrakoot on Sunday for his followers to pay their respects, I before it is donated to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

His body will be brought to Delhi around 2.30 p.m. and will be kept at Keshavkunj, the RSS' office, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. for his followers and admirers to pay their respects. As per Mr. Deshmukh's wish, his body will be donated to AIIMS for medical research. -PTI

Special Correspondent reports from Chennai:

Condoling his death, Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy described Mr. Deshmukh as a visionary and an idealist. Dr. Swamy said he believed constructive work was a part of enlightened politics.

While recalling Mr. Deshmukh's efforts at educating people in self-reliance in rural development, Dr. Swamy also highlighted his contribution to Indian politics in fighting the Emergency.

the pioneer
2010; PAGES 16 72

Last adieu given to Nanaji with state honours

Nanaji was a great thinker and social worker: Governor

Body handed over to AIIMS

Last adieu given to Nanaji with state honours

Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan placed a wreath on the body of famous social worker Padma Vibhushan the late Shri Nanaji Deshmukh at Chitrakoot in Satna district today. Shri Nanaji Deshmukh's body was brought to Satna by road with full state honours from where it was flown to Delhi by a special aircraft.

The body of the late Shri Deshmukh was placed at Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Park at Surendrapal School ground in Chitrakoot for paying last respects by people. Here, a contingent of armed forces gave him a salute. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan placed a wreath on the body of the late Shri Deshmukh to pay tributes to him. In his condolence message, Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that Nanaji was a selfless man of deeds. He dedicated his entire life for the service of nation and people. At the age of 60, he relinquished politics and dedicated his life for the service of the downtrodden and society.

The Chief Minister said that the works started by the late Nanaji Deshmukh for nation's development and people's welfare will be accomplished by following in his footsteps.

Public Works Minister Shri Nagendra Singh and incharge minister of the district Shri Rajendra Shukla also paid their tributes by placing wreaths on the body of Shri Deshmukh. Satna district collector read out a condolence message of Governor Shri Rameshwar Thakur and placed a wreath on the body on his behalf.

A condolence meeting was also observed where a two-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the departed soul. After this, the body was placed on a bedecked vehicle and the last journey of Shri Deshmukh began from Chitrakoot with full state honours.

At Satna, the body of Shri Deshmukh was kept at the airstrip where large number of people paid their last respects. From here, his body was flown to New Delhi by a special plane. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan and Shri Anil Madhav Dave accompanied the body on board the aircraft.

Nanaii was a great thinker and social worker : Governor

Staff Reporter ■ Bhopal

Governor Rameshwar Thakur has condoled the death of founder of Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwa Vidyalaya and former Rajya Sabha member Nanaji Deshmukh. In his condolence message, Thakur said that Nanaji Deshmukh was a man of deeds and the Indian society has lost a great, thinker and social worker in his death. Describing Nanaji Deshmukh as true Pro-founder of rural development, education and Indian traditions. Thakur said that he played an active role in establishment of country's first rural university in the State. The Governor described Nanaji Deshmukh as a selfless, nationalist and dedicated politician.

He prayed to God to grant peace to the departed soul and strength to the bereaved family to bear this loss. The Chief Minister said that the works started by Nanaji Deshmukh for nation's development and people's welfare will be accomplished by following in his footsteps.

Finance Minister Raghavji, 'Tourism, Sports & Youth Welfare Minister Tukojirao Puar, Home Minister Umashankar Gupta and Minister of State for Energy (Independent charge) Rajendra Shukla have condoled the death of great social worker Nanaji Deshmukh.

Raghavji said that Nanaji dedicated his entire life to the service of the nation and society. Even after death, he has set a best precedent by donating his body for human service. Tukojirao Puar said that the late Nanaji was a seer. Minister Gupta said that Nanaji's life is a source of inspiration for one and all. Rajendra Shukla said that Nanaji was an incarnate of dedication, simplicity and social service. BJP Rural Development Cell State President Dhiraj Pateria said Nanaji worked to realise the dream of Sarvodaya and in the process established country's first Gramoday University.

Body handed over to AIIMS

The body of great social worker the late Nanaji Deshmukh was handed over to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Sunday as per his wishes. The Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was also present on the occasion. The body of Deshmukh was brought here by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and senior leader Anil Dave by a Chartered Plane. At the airport, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj, Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley, senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh and a large number of people paid tributes to the great social worker.

Later, the body was taken to Keshav Kunj where a large number of people paid their last respects to the departed soul. Chouhan placed a wreath on the body of late leader.