



ILLUSTRATION: AJAYA MOHANTY

PRIME MINISTER: 2004–2014; UNION FINANCE MINISTER: 1991–1996; RBI GOVERNOR: 1982–1985

MANMOHAN SINGH 1932-2024

The architect of economic reforms

ARCHIS MOHAN

New Delhi, 26 December

Manmohan Singh, India's 14th Prime Minister, who is considered the architect of the economic reforms in the country, passed away on Thursday night in New Delhi. He was 92.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, announced his death. The AIIMS bulletin said: "He was treated for age-related medical conditions and had sudden loss of consciousness at home". "Resuscitative measures were started immediately at home. He was brought to medical emergency at AIIMS Delhi at 8.06 pm. Despite all efforts, he could not be revived and was declared dead at 9.51 pm," said the bulletin.

Singh, who served as prime minister for two consecutive terms from 2004 to 2014 under the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), had been in declining health in recent months. He is survived by his wife, Gursharan Kaur, and three daughters.

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"PAY HOMAGE TO ONE OF THE GREATEST SONS OF BHARAT. MY DEEPEST CONDOLENCE TO HIS FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ADMIRERS"

DROUPADI MURMU,
President



"...HE LEFT A STRONG IMPRINT ON OUR ECONOMIC POLICY OVER THE YEARS... AS OUR PM, HE MADE EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S LIVES"

NARENDRA MODI,
Prime Minister



"HE LED INDIA WITH IMMENSE WISDOM, HIS HUMILITY INSPIRED THE NATION. I HAVE LOST A MENTOR AND A GUIDE"

RAHUL GANDHI,
LoP, Lok Sabha

A man with few parallels

Few Indians in the field of public policymaking have achieved what Manmohan Singh did in his long and distinguished career as a technocrat. For a quarter century, from 1971 to 1996, he held virtually all the important positions in the sphere of economic policymaking in the Union government. He won the Adam Smith Prize at Cambridge (Amartya Sen was the previous winner). In May 2004, the UPA victory in the general elections offered him the job of Prime Minister. He held that position for 10 years, during which his job came under close scrutiny. As Prime Minister, Singh endorsed the rights-based policies that the UPA rolled out with legislative sanction. These included the right to employment, the right to information and the right to education. Singh strove for pragmatism in policymaking. In doing so, he showed a deep understanding of India's political economy. **A K BHATTACHARYA** writes

FULL REPORT ON PAGES 4-5

Singh steered India to becoming \$2 trn economy

Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra rushed to the hospital upon learning of his hospitalisation.

Condoling Singh's death, Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X: "His interventions in Parliament were also insightful. As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives." Recalling their interactions when he was the Gujarat chief minister and Singh the country's prime minister, Modi said they would have extensive deliberations on various subjects relating to governance."

A national mourning of 7 days has been declared, while all government programmes scheduled for Friday have been cancelled. A Cabinet meeting scheduled for tomorrow has also been called off.

Singh presided over a period of unprecedented growth during his tenure as prime minister. Between 2004 and 2014, India witnessed rapid economic expansion, the fastest since Independence, emerging as a nearly \$2 trillion economy. His government was also marked by a series of transformative rights-based legislations, including the Right to Food, Right to Education, Right to Work, and the Right to Information. These initiatives reshaped Indian politics, bringing inclusive growth to the fore-

LIFE AND TIMES

Born on September 26, 1932, in Punjab, Undivided India

► Education

- Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics from Panjab University (1952-1954)
- Economic Tripos from Cambridge University (1957)
- DPhil in Economics from Oxford University (1962)

► Early career

- Taught at Punjab University and the Delhi School of Economics
- Joined the Government of India as Economic Advisor in the Commerce Ministry (1971)
- Promoted to Chief

front. Singh's economic legacy, however, predates his time as prime minister. As finance minister in the P V Narasimha Rao-led Congress government in 1991, Singh presented a historic Budget that liberalised India's economy, paving the way for decades of growth. He ended his Budget speech, which unleashed the reforms, with the words of Victor Hugo: "No power on earth can stop an idea

Economic Advisor in the Finance Ministry (1972)

- Had a stint at the UNCTAD Secretariat

■ Appointed Secretary General of the South Commission in Geneva (1987-1990)

■ Held positions such as Secretary in the Finance Ministry, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and Governor of the Reserve Bank of India

► Political career

- Elected as a Member of the Rajya Sabha in 1991
- Became finance minister in PV Narasimha Rao's cabinet in June 1991
- On July 24, 1991, presented his first Budget – a game changing one – in

whose time has come. I suggest to this august House that the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea."

Born on September 26, 1932, in Gah in West Punjab, now in Pakistan, Singh migrated to India during the Partition. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics from Panjab University in 1952 and 1954, respectively, followed

the shadow of a balance of payments crisis, with India on the brink of a sovereign default. Along with Narasimha Rao, ushered in the era of economic liberalisation

■ Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha (1998-2004)

■ Became India's 14th Prime Minister on May 22, 2004, and again on May 22, 2009

■ As prime minister, oversaw India's highest growth rate in history, averaging 7.7% and making India a nearly two trillion-dollar economy

■ Passed Right to Food, Right to Education, Right to Work, and Right to Information Acts

by an Economic Tripos at Cambridge University (1957) and a D.Phil in Economics from Oxford University (1962).

Singh's career spanned academia and public service. He taught at Panjab University and the Delhi School of Economics before joining the government as economic advisor at the commerce ministry in 1971. He was then promoted as chief economic advisor in the

finance ministry in 1972.

After a short stint at the UNCTAD Secretariat, he was appointed secretary general of the South Commission in Geneva from 1987-1990. In addition, Singh also held the positions of secretary in the finance ministry, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, governor of the Reserve Bank of India, advisor to the prime minister, and chairman of the University Grants Commission.

In Parliament, Singh was a Rajya Sabha member from 1991 to 2024 and Leader of the Opposition from 1998 to 2004.

In 2004, Singh became prime minister as a surprise consensus candidate after the Congress emerged as the single-largest party and formed a coalition government. His tenure saw Congress achieve its best electoral performance in two

decades during the 2009 elections, bagging 206 seats — a victory attributed to his leadership. In his stint as the PM in 2009 Singh emerged as a global statesman with US President Barack Obama stating that he considered Singh his "guru".

Singh was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1987 and received international accolades, including the Euro Money Award for Finance Minister of the Year in 1993 and the Asia Money Award in 1993 and 1994. He was given the Jawaharlal Nehru Birth Centenary Award of the Indian Science Congress in 1995.

Remembered for his humility, integrity, and intellect, Singh leaves behind a legacy of economic transformation and dedicated public service. His soft-spoken demeanour and steadfast vision continue to inspire generations.

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