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Manmohan Singh's contribution to the development of India will always be remembered. His life was a reflection of his honesty and simplicity. He was a distinguished parliamentarian. His life will always be a lesson on how a person can attain success by rising above deprivation, and struggle

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

He was a brilliant economist with a great vision of what India could be, combined with a fine sense of what was possible politically... The liberalisation and reforms he undertook with the support of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao laid the foundations of the modern Indian economy

— Raghuram Rajan, Former RBI Governor

He was a statesman committed to harmony and resolution. I recall our meetings, both during his tenure as prime minister and before, where his sincerity towards dialogue on Kashmir and fostering people-to-people contact across borders was evident

— Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Hurriyat Conference Chairman

Dr Singh was one of the greatest champions of the US-India strategic partnership, and his work laid the foundation for much of what our countries have accomplished together in the past two decades

— Tony Blinken, US Secretary of State

A great PM, Finance Minister and global statesman who advanced India's interests through bold economic reforms and played a key role in putting India in its rightful place on the world stage and stabilising the global economy after the financial crisis

— Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to the India

Manmohan Singh

The reluctant PM who transformed India



NEW DELHI, 27 DEC

Manmohan Singh, often hailed as the architect of modern India's economic reforms, also championed environmental conservation and climate action during his decade-long tenure as prime minister (2004-2014).

Under his leadership, India launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change, passed the landmark Forest Rights Act (FRA) to protect the rights of tribal communities, and established the National Green Tribunal to safeguard the environment through swift legal action.

For centuries, India's tribal communities were sidelined from decisions about their own land. The UPA-1 government under Singh flipped that script.

His government passed the Forest Rights Act in 2006, handing back control of forests to the people who lived in and protected them.

Around 25 lakh land titles, including over 23.7 lakh individual titles, have been granted so far to Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers under the FRA.

In July 2008, Singh urged all chief ministers to act swiftly to grant tribals their rights over forest land.

In 2008, the Manmohan Singh government delivered the NAPCC, an eightfold strategy to tackle global warming. The NAPCC's eight core missions include the National Solar Mission, which laid the groundwork for the country to emerge as a global clean energy leader, and the Green India Mission,

which focuses on improving biodiversity, restoring degraded lands, and enhancing climate resilience.

Singh strongly advocated for climate justice. Speaking at the Washington office of the Council on Foreign Relations on 23 November, he made it clear that India wouldn't accept unfair carbon shackles. "India was a late-comer to industrialisation. And as such, we have contributed very little to the accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming. But we are determined to be part of the solution to the problem."

We are willing to work towards any solution that does not compromise the right of developing countries to develop and lift their population out of poverty," he said.

Under Singh's watch, India set up the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2010 to fast-track environmental justice. Over the years, the NGT became the watchdog India needed for delivering speedy judgments on critical issues like pollution, deforestation, and wildlife conservation.

Unassuming, erudite, soft-spoken, and a consensus builder, Singh died on Thursday night at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). He was 92.

The Congress leader, who steered the country for 10 years from 2004-2014 and helped set up the country's economic framework as Finance Minister before that, was a renowned name in the global financial and economic sectors. —PTI

PLEASE BE LENIENT: MANMOHAN SINGH SHIELDED JNU PROTESTERS

NEW DELHI, 27 DEC

Erudite and soft-spoken, former prime minister Manmohan Singh developed his reputation as a consensus builder during his stint as the finance minister who opened the doors for economic reform in India.

But it was his intervention to prevent the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration from acting against students who had held a protest against him in 2005 that showcased a fresh dimension of his persona.

Visiting the JNU campus to unveil a statue of former prime minister

Jawaharlal Nehru, Singh was shown black flags by Left-backed students.

The incident led to the university issuing show-cause notices to the students, with a few of them even being detained by the Delhi Police. A day later, Singh intervened, suggesting to the then vice-chancellor BB Bhattacharya to be lenient with the students. During his visit to the campus, known for its strong anti-establishment stance, Singh had quoted the French philosopher Voltaire, saying, "I may disagree with what you have to say but I shall defend to the death your right to say it". —PTI



Former president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and ex-PM Manmohan Singh PHOTO: PTI

MANMOHAN SINGH'S POETIC SIDE

A leader of reserve and quiet dignity, former prime minister Manmohan Singh had a keen taste for Urdu verses, and his poetic banter with BJP leader Sushma Swaraj in Lok Sabha are among the most viewed parliamentary debates on social media.

During a fierce debate in Parliament in 2011, the then Lok Sabha Opposition leader Swaraj deployed Varanasi-born poet Shahab Jafri's 'sher' to fire a salvo at prime minister Singh, whose government was beginning to be mired in corruption charges.

She said during the debate, "Tu idhar udhar ki na baat kar, yeh bata ki kafila kyun luta, humein rahjano se gila nahi, teri rahbari ka sawal hai (Instead of talking about irrelevant issues, tell us why the caravan was looted. I have no complaint against the robbers but I question your leadership)". Instead of meeting fire with fire, Singh -- in his very own unassuming way -- invoked Allama Iqbal's disarming lines to bring down the roof.

He said, "Mana ki teri deed ke kaabil nahin hoon main, tu mera shauq dekh mera intezar dekh (Agreed I am not worthy of drawing your sight. But look at my zeal, my longing)". Singh had resorted to a similar poetic response when reporters quizzed him on corruption charges besetting his government. He had said, "Hazzaro jawabon se achchhi hai meri khamoshi, jo kayi sawalo ki aabru dhak leti hai (My silence is better than thousands of questions, or it will expose many of the questions)".

HOW HE DEFENDED LANDMARK 1991 BUDGET

Manmohan Singh had to literally face a trial-by-fire to ensure widespread acceptance of his path-breaking 1991 Union Budget that saw the nation rise from its darkest financial crises.

Singh, the newly-appointed finance minister in the PV Narasimha Rao-led government, did it with great élan -- from facing journalists at a post-budget press conference to irate Congress leaders unable to digest the wide-ranging reforms at the parliamentary party meeting.

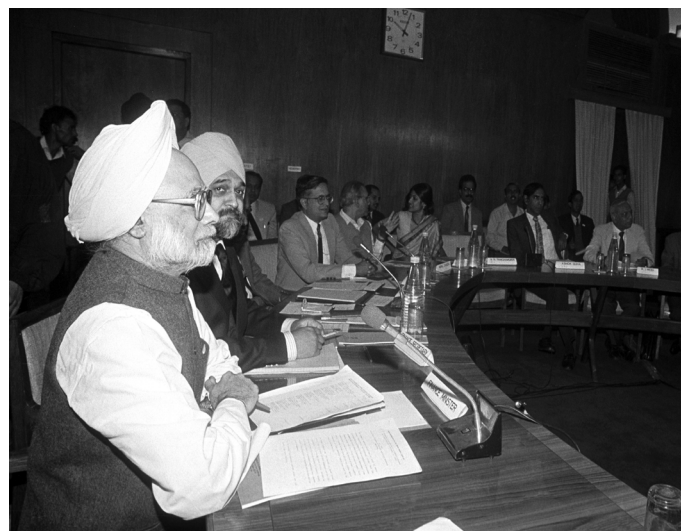
Singh's historic reforms not only rescued India from near bankruptcy but also redefined its trajectory as a rising global power. Singh made an unscheduled

appearance at a press conference on 25 July, 1991, a day after the presentation of the Union Budget, "to ensure that the message of his budget did not get distorted by less-than-enthusiastic officials", Congress leader Jairam Ramesh wrote in his book 'To the Brink and Back: India's 1991 Story' that recounts the fast-paced changes that took place after Rao became prime minister in June 1991.

"The finance minister explained his budget -- calling it 'a budget with a human face'. He painstakingly defended the proposals to increase fertiliser, petrol and LPG prices," Ramesh recounted in the book published in 2015.

Ramesh was an aide to Rao during his initial months in office. Sensing the disquiet in Congress ranks, Rao called a meeting of Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) on 1 August, 1991, and decided to allow party MPs to "vent their spleen freely". "The PM stayed away and allowed Manmohan to face the flak," Ramesh wrote.

Only two MPs -- Mani Shankar Aiyar and Nathuram Mirdeha -- backed HIM. Bowing to pressure from the party, Singh had agreed to lower the 40 per cent increase in fertiliser prices to 30 per cent but had left the hike in LPG and petrol prices untouched.



The then finance minister Manmohan Singh during a meeting with industrialists on 22 Nov, 1994 PHOTO: PTI



Tibetan Spiritual leader Dalai Lama with former PM Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on 22 Sept, 2014 PHOTO: PTI

AHEAD OF POLLS

MANMOHAN SINGH PREFERRED HIS MARUTI OVER BMW

Even when serving as prime minister, Manmohan Singh preferred his modest Maruti Suzuki 800 over a luxury BMW as it reaffirmed his connection with the middle class and commitment to work for the common man. Singh's humility and grounded nature were highlighted in a heartfelt social media memoir by Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Social Welfare (Independent Charge) Asim Arun. Arun served as Singh's close protection officer for nearly three years during his tenure as a Special Protection Group officer. Arun recalled Singh telling him, "Asim, I don't like travelling in this car (BMW). My car is the Maruti." Arun said he would explain the security requirements of the high-tech BMW to Singh but the former prime minister's gaze would always turn to the Maruti.

Manmohan Singh had chastised Modi for spreading hate

NEW DELHI, 27 DEC

His delicate health notwithstanding, the politician in former prime minister Manmohan Singh came out sharply during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections when he accused his successor Narendra Modi of lowering the dignity of public discourse and the gravity of the office of the prime minister by delivering "hateful speeches" during the poll campaign.

In an appeal to voters in Punjab ahead of the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha polls on 1 June, Singh had asserted that only Congress could ensure a growth-oriented progressive future where democracy and the Constitution would be safeguarded.

He had also hit out at BJP government for imposing an "ill-conceived" Agnipath scheme, which he termed as a threat to national security. "The BJP thinks that the value of patriotism, bravery and service is only four years.

This shows their fake nationalism," he had said in what is considered as his last letter to voters of Punjab.

Congress had released Singh's letter on 30 May.

Singh had said those who trained for regular recruitment were woefully betrayed by the Modi regime.

He had said, "The youth of Punjab, the son of the farmer, who dreams of serving the motherland through the Armed Forces, is now thinking twice about getting recruited only for a four-year stint. The Agniveer scheme endangers national security."

"No prime minister in the past has uttered such hateful, unparliamentary and coarse terms, meant to target either a specific section of the society. He has also attributed some false statements to me. I have never in my life singled out one community from the other. That is the sole copyright of the BJP," he had said. "People of India are seeing



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with ex-PM Manmohan Singh PHOTO: PTI

through all of this. This narrative of dehumanisation has now reached its peak. It is now our duty to save our beloved nation from these forces of discord," Singh had said. He had appealed to the voters to give love, peace, fraternity

and harmony a chance in India and urged the voters in Punjab to vote for development and inclusive progress.

"I appeal to all the young minds to exercise caution and vote for a brighter future," Singh had said.

MANMOHAN SINGH'S SPECIAL BOND WITH AMRITSAR

Former PM Manmohan Singh shared a special bond with the holy city of Amritsar, where he spent his growing up years. Born at Gah in Punjab province which now falls in Pakistan's Chakwal before his family migrated to Amritsar after Partition, Singh completed his schooling from Amritsar and did his graduation in economics from the Hindu College here. Singh's half-brother from his extended family, Surjit Singh Kohli, who ran a readymade garment business in Amritsar, said the former prime minister had deep affection for his grandmother who raised him following his mother's death when he was very young. "He used to visit the Golden Temple every time he came to the holy city," Surjit Kohli said.