

MS Gill, the man who introduced EVMs, passes away

By Abhya Adlakha
Oct 16, 2023 04:25 AM IST

Gill's work "Agriculture Cooperatives: A Case Study of Punjab" is among his best-known work on Punjab and farm issues in India



Chief Election Commissioner, MS Gill - HT Photo by Sanjay Sharma.

Former chief election commissioner of India and Congress leader [Manohar Singh Gill](#) died on Sunday at a hospital in New Delhi. He was 87.

Gill passed away at Max Super Speciality Hospital in Saket.

A former Indian Administrative Services officer, Gill served as chief election commissioner from 1996 to 2001. He joined the Congress party in 2004 and represented Punjab in the Rajya Sabha from 2004 to 2016, during which he held positions as youth affairs and sports minister and minister of statistics and programme implementation.

Gill was a prolific writer and scholar, known for his sharp intellect. He penned books such as “Himalayan Wonder: Travels in Lahaul and Spiti”, and “An Indian Success Story”. His work “Agriculture Cooperatives: A Case Study of Punjab” is among his best-known work on Punjab and farm issues in India.

Awarded the Padma Vibhushan for his tenure as election commissioner, his major achievement was introducing electronic voting machines in India, an idea that largely helped curb polling malpractices in the country. He was also awarded the Nishan-e-Khalsa on the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa.

His leadership and commitment to the electoral process will continue to inspire the election commission, the poll overseer said in a statement.

“During his tenure as CEC, ECI successfully conducted the General Elections to the 12th Lok Sabha in 1998 and 13th Lok Sabha in 1999; 11th Presidential Elections and Vice-Presidential Elections in 1997, and General Elections to Legislative Assemblies in more than 20 states,” Anuj Chandak, joint director of the election commission, wrote in the statement. “His leadership and commitment to the electoral process will continue to inspire us at the Election Commission of India.”

Upon news of his death, various public figures and parliamentarians took to X (formerly Twitter) to express sorrow.

Congress president and Rajya Sabha member Mallikarjun Kharge said he was saddened by the death and lauded Gill’s contributions to the development of India.

“Extremely saddened at the passing away of Former Union Minister, Padma Vibhushan, Shri Manohar Singh Gill Ji. As a valued colleague in the UPA Govt (sic) and earlier as a civil servant, his contributions to the development of the nation in varied fields like sports, electoral processes, and agriculture were long-lasting. Our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and followers,” Mallikarjun posted on X.

“Saddened to hear about the passing away of former CEC and Union Minister Dr. Manohar Singh Gill. My heartfelt condolences are with his family and I pray to Waheguru ji to grant eternal peace to the departed soul,” former Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh posted.

Gill served under Singh when he was agricultural secretary of Punjab from 1985-87.

Travel influencer Harjinder Singh Kukreja penned a long, heartfelt message expressing his sorrow over the former election commissioner’s death and recounted his first meeting with him.

“Our paths first intertwined on the sacred soil of St. George’s College. His memorable visit during a sports day, where he was the Chief Guest, remains etched in memory, especially the joy unleashed by his surprise 10-day holiday announcement. His laughter, mingling with the crisp Mussoorie air, encapsulated a moment of youthful glee,” Kukreja wrote.

“As years unfolded, his journey from the Indian Administrative Service to becoming the Chief Election Commissioner emerged as a guiding light. His tireless drive for change, especially his pioneering effort in introducing Electronic Voting Machines, showcased his vision for a progressive India,” he added.

“As we bid adieu to this illustrious son of India and proud Manorite, his life’s narrative urges us to uphold truth, justice, and selfless service—the essence of the Manorite ethos,” Kukreja wrote.