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## **Bharat Ratna to Chaudhary Charan Singh is honour to India's 90 crore farmers: UP minister**

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Bharat Ratna to Chaudhary Charan Singh is honour to India's 90 crore farmers: UP minister



Singh, who was posthumously conferred with India's highest civilian award on February 9, championed for farmers' causes. Speaking to PTI on Sunday, Chaudhary said, "After Independence, Chaudhary Charan Singh was the only politician to be regarded as the messiah of the farmers. He was the first to say that the path which leads to the development of the country passes through its farms."

"He had taken a number of steps in the interest and welfare of the farmers. His name will always remain etched in history in golden letters," the minister for minister for sugarcane development and sugar industry said.

"Conferring Bharat Ratna to Chaudhary Charan is an honour to the 90 crore farmers of India," he added. Elaborating on the steps taken by the Bharat Ratna recipient for the welfare of the country's farmers, the UP cabinet minister said Singh brought a number of pro-farmer legislations such as the Consolidation of Holdings Act of 1953 and the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari and Land Reforms Act, 1952.

Recalling his relations with the former prime minister, Chaudhary said, "My association with him was almost since my childhood days. It was in 1967 when I first met him. At that time, I was in high school (Class 10)."

"With his (Charan Singh's) blessings, I became an MLA (fom Chhata). I had the honour of becoming the chairman of the Mandi Samiti of Kosi Kalan (in Mathura) when I was a student. This was in 1977, when I had appeared in the LLB final year examination after completing MA. Subsequently, in 1985, I was given the ticket by the party (Lok Dal)" he said.

Chaudhary has represented the Chhata assembly constituency in Mathura district five times in the UP Legislative Assembly. He was a Lok Dal MLA from 1985 to 1989 and a Congress MLA from 1996 to 2002. From 2007 to 2012, he was a BSP MLA from the same seat. From 2017, Chaudhary has been representing Chhata in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on a BJP ticket.

The 72-year-old Uttar Pradesh minister also said that his "struggle for the farmers was inspired by Chaudhary Charan Singh ji" as he called the former prime minister a "fearless leader" and recollected that he was strict in dealing with the 'Patwari strike crisis' in 1953. Asked about the qualities of the late Bharat Ratna awardee that inspired him, Chaudhary said, "Singh saahab's biggest strength was his honesty. He was a true well-wisher of the farmers and led a very simple life."

"He was deeply influenced by the ideas and teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj. Economics was his favourite subject and he always wanted to strengthen the economy of the farmers." the minister added.

Chaudhary added that Singh was also inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and he joined the freedom movement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 9 announced that former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh as well as agriculture scientist M S Swaminathan will be honoured with the Bharat Ratna.

Singh is popularly known as a champion of farmers. Opposed to the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's socialist economy, he advocated ownership rights to the farmers. Though Singh was a Congress follower in the beginning of his political career, he quit the party in the 1960s and went on to form the first non-Congress government not just in Uttar Pradesh but entire north India. In his long political career, Singh briefly served as the sixth prime minister and served as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh on two occasions -- from April 3, 1967 to February 25, 1968 and from February 18, 1970 to October 1, 1970. Singh, a scholar of economics, played an important role in rural electrification and the creation of institutions such as the NABARD. He died on May 29, 1987 at the age of 84 years. His birth anniversary, December 23, is celebrated as Kisan Diwas.