

# Ram Vilas Paswan

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In News

The veteran Dalit leader Ram Vilas Paswan has died at the age of 74. Elected for the first time as an MLA in 1969 as a member of an anti-Congress front after quitting his job as a police official, he rose through the ranks of various socialist parties, which changed forms with a periodic interval, and became a **leading Dalit face**.

More About Ram Vilas Paswan

- Born in **Khagaria in Bihar in 1946**, Ram Vilas Paswan was elected to Lok Sabha eight times and was currently a Rajya Sabha member.
- In 1969, he was elected to the Bihar assembly from the **Samyukta Socialist Party** (SSP). He was **imprisoned during the Emergency** and, when it was lifted in 1977, he joined the Janata Party.
- He won from his home seat **Hajipur** with the largest margin at that time, making a name for himself in the Guinness Book of Records. He was to **win from this reserved constituency eight times**.
- He was one of the key ministers in the V P Singh government, which came to power in 1989, and **pushed for implementing the Mandal Commission report, which recommended reservation for other backward classes**, upending the pivot of politics, especially in Hindi-speaking states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh forever.
- Paswan was then Minister of Welfare and was among the first to insist firmly that there would be early implementation of reservations on the lines suggested by the Mandal Commission, despite nationwide protests from upper caste youth opposed to the reservation policy.
- A strong socialist leader of his times, Paswan's early

political career was influenced, like many of his contemporaries in Bihar politics, by the two iconic figures – **Jay Prakash Narain and Karpuri Thakur.**

- He was warmly accepted across parties as contrasting in their ideologies as the Congress and the BJP, that he was courted by arch rivals like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi and served as a **valuable minister in the BJP-led NDA as well as the Congress-led UPA governments.**
- He served as a minister in the governments of V P Singh, H D Deve Gowda, I K Gujral, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi. The portfolios he held included Railways, Labour and Welfare, Food.