

## Top two richest Rajya Sabha MPs are from Bihar

Amitabh Srivastava Patna, February 26, 2014 | UPDATED 13:45 IST

Just before he transforms into a superhero in Krrish 3, Hrithik Roshan plays a security guard in SIS security uniform. The security agency fires him and the ordinary guard becomes the superhero, who rescues a whole aircraft in the very next scene.



Mahendra Prasad, (left) Ravindra Kishore Sinha

BJP MP Ravindra Kishore Sinha's story is almost like the Krrish 3 script. Not only is Sinha the owner of Security and Intelligence Services (SIS) India Private Ltd that he set up four decades ago after being sacked from his first job, he is also India's richest Rajya Sabha MP. With his personal wealth pegged at Rs.857 crore and the company's turnover touching Rs.3200 crore, Sinha has come a long way from the reporter's job in a Patna-based newspaper that got him Rs.230 a month.

Sinha's election recently pushed Mahendra Prasad - from Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal-United, an erstwhile ally turned sworn enemy -- into the second spot. With a total asset worth of Rs.683 crore, Mahendra Prasad - better known as King Mahendra in political circles -- who is also from Bihar, is currently serving his sixth consecutive term in the Upper House after bagging second successive nomination from JD-U in 2012.

The presence of the two rich men from Bihar only confirms a trend in Rajya Sabha. Of the 58 new RS members elected this year, 50 have assets in crores with average assets of Rs.44.74 crore, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms. But between the two of them - these men from one of India's poorest states - possess personal wealth of over Rs.1,500 crore.

Apart from their humble beginnings to immense riches stories, Sinha and Prasad are not just on the opposite ends of the political spectrum, their journeys have been different too. Unlike Sinha, who had to wait 38 years after he was drafted into the RSS by Deendayal Upadhyaya in 1966 to become a legislator, Prasad's entry into Parliament was a smooth ride. Having successfully contested the 1980 Lok Sabha poll on a Congress ticket, Prasad lost the polls for the eighth Lok Sabha held in 1984. But the Rajiv Gandhi government got Prasad nominated to Rajya Sabha in 1985. Since then he has remained in the Upper House.

Bihar and its politics have changed since the 1980s. First, Lalu Prasad Yadav replaced the Congress in 1990 and eventually Nitish Kumar ousted Yadav in 2005. These changes, however, have not made any difference to Prasad. He has been sent to the Upper House by the Congress, RJD and JD-U, twice each.

Sinha, on the other hand, missed a RS nomination many times before the BJP finally backed him in election year, but he did not jump parties. In 2012, he was ready for the nomination but had to back off after the BJP conceded four of the six seats to Nitish Kumar. Though he has not been a prolific participant-having asked just six questions during his 29 years in the Rajya Sabha according to RS records--- Prasad has retained his relevance apparently because of his abundant wealth. According to sources, Prasad's success can be traced to his persistent desire to stay crowned as a lawmaker and his utility for politicians.

Born in a lower middle-class family, Sinha became a journalist at 20 with a Patna-based newspaper after graduating in political science. A year later, he sneaked into Bangladesh in 1971 and reported the Indo-Pak war. Sinha got a raise at his new spaper but things worsened when he got involved in Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution movement during the infamous Emergency days. Sinha was given one-month advance salary and shown the door in 1974.

A few ex-servicemen he had befriended during his journalism days encouraged him to set up a security agency. He hired a garage in Patna and got the first contract--- for supplying 11 security guards to a Ramgarh based factory-- in 1974.



He has not looked back. Today, Sinha has diverse business interests, including a school in Dehradun where he offers free education to one out of every four students. The highpoint of his career came in 2008, when Sinha's firm SIS acquired the Australian security firm Chubb seven times its size. It has now been rechristened MSS Security and Sinha was able to turn around the business and make it a roaring success.

In taste and temperament, Sinha has remained a quintessential Bihari and gets his kurta-pyjama stitched from an old-time tailor in Patna. Of his 70,000 workforce, nearly half come from Bihar's backwater districts. You cannot think of Sinha throwing a party without litti-chokha on the platter. "His idea of holidaying is in Dehradun and not Switzerland that we prefer," says son Rituraj.

From a fleet of cars that he owns-Mercedes, Land Rover, Audi-- Sinha still prefers to travel in his Innova. He still uses the old BlackBerry mobile he bought three years ago. "He likes to use gadgets till they become unusable. He is not brand conscious, he prefers anything that looks or feels comfortable. The only thing he is particular about is travelling first class. Nothing else," says Rituraj.

Sinha is also known for charity and is known to give away half of the Rs.5 crore annual package that he draws from his company. Known in the BJP circles for his special proximity to former party president Murli Manohar Joshi, Sinha is also believed to have bankrolled BJP's campaign in Bihar and Delhi.

When Narendra Modi addressed Hunkar rally in Patna, Sinha is believed to have spent a fortune on making arrangements for it. Now with a Rajya Sabha seat, Sinha hopes to contribute to policy making. "It's the opportunity to be able to make a difference. I am yearning to contribute for development of meaningful policies. Help the government create employment opportunities for the rural youth," Sinha says.

Before his Rajya Sabha nomination, Sinha had made a personal target of providing one lakh jobs. "The personal target does not mean much now that as a RS member I can help the government create many more jobs," says Sinha.

Although Sinha is still at the core of his business empire, he has passed the baton to his son Rituraj for all operational purposes. Sinha is believed to have succeeded in business because he could think ahead of the times. "When he set up his agency for security guards, our society was content with the then existing chowkidar system. He provided better service and thus created a demand," says Rituraj.

For Sinha, it's yet another uphill journey at hand. In the election year, when BJP is hoping to wrest majority of Lok Sabha seats in Bihar from friend-turned-foe Nitish Kumar, Sinha has his hands full. From opening his purse for Lok Sabha elections to making a RS debut in April, Sinha has many things lined up for him. Once that is done, he wishes to pen down the story of his life.



Read more at: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/ravindra-kishore-sinha-mahendra-prasad-richest-ministers-in-bihar/1/345703.html>