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Keshubhai Patel, Gujarat's first BJP CM, passes away aged 92

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
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Gandhinagar: Former Gujarat chief minister Keshubhai Patel passed away in Ahmedabad on Thursday morning after suffering a heart attack. He was 92.

From joining the RSS as a pracharak while in his teens, Keshubhai was a key leader of the Jan Sangh. He became the first president of BJP's Gujarat unit and played a major role in the party's rise in Gujarat.

Keshubhai, fondly known as 'Bapa' in Gujarat, suffered a heart attack on Thursday morning at his Gandhinagar home. He was rushed to a private hospital in Ahmedabad, where he breathed his last. Later in the afternoon, his body was taken to his house in Gandhinagar and then to the BJP



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state headquarters, Kamlam, for party workers and the public to pay their last respects. Keshubhai's mortal remains were cremated in the evening.

The first BJP chief minister of Gujarat, Keshubhai Patel did not enjoy long stints as CM. In his first stint, Patel had to step down in the face of a rebellion led by senior party leader Shantersinh Vaghela. He was re-

placed as CM in his second stint in the aftermath of three natural disasters - the 1998 Kandla cyclone, 1999 drought and the devastating earthquake of 2001.

Although he quit the BJP and formed his own political outfit - the Gujarat Parivartan Party - in 2012, he commanded great respect within the BJP. Within a couple of years of forming the GPP, Patel returned to the BJP by merging his outfit with it.

A number of leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled Patel's death. The state government will conduct the final rites of the departed leader with full state honours. "Our beloved and respected Keshubhai has passed away. I am deeply pained and saddened. He was an outstanding leader," PM Modi said.