

Dr Ramanna was known as much for his jovial approach as his science conviction

The man behind Pokharan-I success

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Sept 24: The demise of Dr. Raja Ramanna, 79, mentor of India's nuclear programme, early on Friday morning came as a shock for many people. He passed away at the Bombay Hospital due to an abdominal haemorrhage early on Friday.

Ramanna was in Mumbai for a meeting and was staying with his son, Shyam, when he complained of giddiness and was hospitalised three days ago. He is survived by wife, a son and two daughters.

On hearing of his hospitalisation, President A.P.J. Kalam visited Ramanna at the hospital on Thursday. Kalam reportedly told the doctors that "he is my guru, do everything to save him". Kalam began work at the Defence Research Development Organisation

(DRDO) at Ramanna's behest in the 1970s.

Handpicked by the founder of India's nuclear programme, Dr Homi Bhabha, Ramanna proved to be a pioneer in the growth of physics in India and put the country on the world nuclear map within a short time after his theory of nuclear fission was established between 1965 and 1968.

"He was a man of tremendous foresight and conviction in India's scientific capability. He wanted the nation to scale greater heights," recalls Dr. P.K. Iyengar, colleague and long-time friend at his funeral at the Shivaji Park crematorium, Dadar.

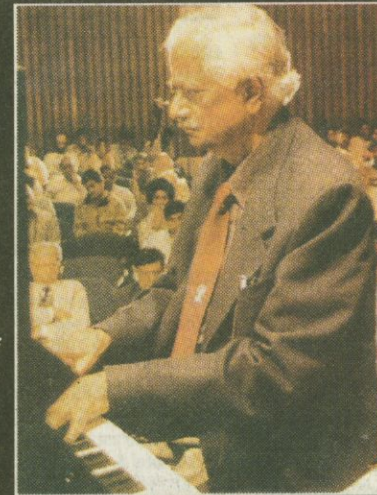
Ramanna rose to become BARC head, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy. He was also the scientific advisor to

PIANO PASSION

• Music was something that was dear to his heart. Playing the piano and Viola, which he started at the age of six, was a passion to him and he played at concerts too

• One of the two books that he authored was on music: *The structure of Music in Raga and western systems*

• Dr Ramanna's other book: *Years of pilgrimage: An Autobiography*



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the Defence Minister and was Minister of Defence from January to November in 1990.

But Ramanna is known and respected as the brain behind the country's first nuclear expl-

osion at Pokharan in 1974, as the then director of the physics group at BARC. "Despite the international debate, it was Mrs Gandhi who stood up for us. We realised the country need-

ed a nuclear weapon," adds Iyengar.

A recipient of Padma Vibhushan, Dr Ramanna; "Raja" to his close friends was a well-balanced and jovial person, according to colleagues and subordinates. "During serious discussions, sometimes his conversations were peppered with humour and wit," recalls E. Ramachandran, his secretary at BARC for 25 years. A member of the Rajya Sabha till last year, Ramanna founded the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore, to train bureaucrats in developing a scientific temperament.

Born in 1925, at Tumkur, Ramanna was a graduate of the Madras University. After completing his Ph.D at King's College, London, he returned to India and joined Homi Bhabha, who was then at the TIFR.

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