

# Raja Ramanna cremated

**Mumbai:** Eminent physicist and doyen of India's nuclear programme, Raja Ramanna, died in the early hours of Friday at a city hospital following an intestinal problem. He was 79.

Ramanna breathed his last at 3.15 am at Bombay Hospital due to internal bleeding in the stomach, Dr B.K. Goyal, hospital dean, said.

His body was taken to the Shivaji Park electric crematorium from his son Shyam's Worli residence and the last rites were performed around 3.45 pm.

On Thursday night, Ramanna's family members and officials at the department of atomic energy had said his end came at 7.30 pm on



Raja Ramanna

Thursday but the doctors at the hospital maintained his condition was critical and he was kept on a ventilator.

"Clinically he is alive," Goyal had told reporters at midnight after President Kalam visited the hospital. Ramanna, who was in Mumbai visiting his son, complained of giddiness and sweating on Monday. He was admitted to Bombay Hospital, his daughter-in-law Seema Ramanna said.

Ramanna is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son. PTI

● **Obituary, reports on page 2**

# He pushed for N-umbrella and peace

By Johnson T.A./TNN

**Bangalore/Mumbai:** "The Buddha is smiling"—the message went out of Pokhran to the PM on May 18, 1974, after India had conducted its first nuclear test, shocking the world.

Years later, Raja Ramanna, the man considered the father of those tests, a man with a beatific smile himself, regretted the association of the Buddha's name with those blasts. "I would never have used the Buddha's name. I have such great respect for him," he said.

## OBITUARY

### Dr Raja Ramanna

The 1974 Pokhran experiment triggered arguments between him and Homi Sethna, then chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Sethna admitted: "Yes, we did have differences because we did not have any specific orders from the Centre to carry out the test. But the issue got resolved amicably." Ramanna was keen on conducting more tests, but the green signal never came.

It is hard to believe that he was one of the few persons who, as a student in the UK, had justified the dropping of atom bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

Ramanna, like Bhabha, pushed for a nuclear envelope. "It is good to have a giant's strength, but very bad to use it," he said as minister of state for defence in 1990. "People are always on the verge of wanting to use nuclear weapons. When better sense will prevail, we don't know," he said in 2003.

In the early 1980s when India failed to procure uranium for its fast breeder reactors, Ramanna, then AEC director, asked his scientists to do the untried: go for a mixture of plutonium carbide and uranium carbide. It clicked.

Former NAL director Roddam Narasimha recalls: "The LCA programme got sanction in 1982, but it was the seminal



Ajay Ghatage

Considered a child prodigy on the piano, scientist Dr Raja Ramanna retained his love for music through his life and performed many concerts. Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* was one of his favourites.



IISc scientists at a condolence meeting.

### Saddam wanted him

**New Delhi:** When Dr Ramanna visited Iraq in 1978 as a personal guest of then President Saddam Hussein, the latter had made an offer that lesser men would have found hard to turn down. "You have done enough for your country. Don't go back. I will pay you whatever you want," he told the scientist.

Seeing the bemused look of the scientist, Saddam, keen to develop his own bomb, said: "I expect you to honour this offer."

Years later, Ramanna recalled staying awake all night worried that Saddam would prevent him from returning home. He never went back to Iraq. IANS

work that Ramanna did to promote the project before the government between 1979 and 1981 that saw the programme being sanctioned.

There was something childlike about him which had endeared him to everyone. In the 1960s in Mumbai, it was a common sight to see him play with children in the garden.

He could play on the grand piano the music of Bach, Beethoven with zest. His daughter Nina told *The Times of India* on Friday: "I will miss playing the piano with dad. We did this quite often." Son Shyam remarked: "I am happy my father led a full, contented and wonderful life for 80 years."

(With inputs from Srinivas Laxman).



An ardent animal lover, Dr Raja Ramanna plays with a pet dog in this file photo.

### 'He bridged art and science'

Messages condoling Dr Raja Ramanna's sudden death poured in on Friday. A shocked governor T.N. Chaturvedi said: "Dr Ramanna played a notable role in the shaping of India's nuclear policy as well as its premier nuclear installations."

Former PM H.D. Deve Gowda and CM Dharam Singh too have condoled his death.

Bishop Cotton Boys' School, where he studied, said they will miss him. "Dr Ramanna remained a patron, guide and well-wisher till the very end," principal A. Ebenezer said.

Some other reactions:

● Even his strongest opinions were given with a smile. He knew India both from inside and outside. — Roddam Narasimha, ex-director NAL, NIAS.

● Dr Ramanna wanted us scientists to explore the boundaries between science and art. — Madhavan Nair, ISRO chairman.

● He was a broadminded person who allowed individuals to develop their own outlook. He never accepted your judgement of things at face value. — Dr K. Kasturirangan, former ISRO chairman and now NIAS director.

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