

Architect of India's first nuclear blast no more

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New Delhi: President A P J Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh led the nation in paying tributes to eminent scientist Raja Ramanna who passed away in Mumbai early Friday. Ramanna had been suffering from intestinal problems. He was 79.

Expressing deep grief at the death of one of the foremost brains involved in the country's nuclear programme, who was also former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and former minister of state for defence, Kalam said, "The passing away of Dr Ramanna is a deep personal loss for me as he was a mentor guide and teacher to me over the years.

The Prime Minister said India had lost "one of its most outstanding scientists".

"Ramanna was associated with India's nuclear programme at a critical stage of its development and contributed to placing the country's indigenous nuclear capabilities on a firm footing," he said. Kalam, on Thursday night rushed to Bombay Hospital from Aurangabad, where he was attending a function, to enquire about Ramanna's health. Both worked together on India's nuclear programme at a critical stage of its development.

K Kasturirangan, Director, National Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), expressed shock over the death. "He was the tallest among the tall in the country's scientific community. I have interacted with him for the past 20 years and for me it is specially bewildering and difficult to come to terms with the tragic loss."

The mortal remains of Ramanna were cremated at the Shivaji Park electric crematorium in Mumbai in the evening.

