

# Humility of a great man

PTI, New Delhi

Once during an event, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam who was then president, refused to sit on a chair that was designated for him -because the chair was larger in size than the other chairs.

This was one of the several instances where Kalam's actions became synonymous with simplicity and humility that was the hallmark of his public life - both as India's top scientist and most loved president.

At a convocation of IIT (BHU) Varanasi, Kalam was the chief guest and there were five chairs on the stage, the centre one being for the president. The other four were designated for the top university officials.

Noticing his chair being bigger in size than the others, Kalam refused to sit on it and offered the chair to the vice chancellor to sit instead, according to a published account. The VC couldn't, obviously and another chair was made available immediately for the "People's President".

Once, Kalam rejected the suggestion to put broken glass on the wall of a building that needed protection because it would be harmful for birds.

This happened when Kalam was with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and his team was discussing options to secure the perimeter of a building that needed protection. Kalam reportedly said: "If we do that, birds will not be able to perch on the wall."



Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (1931-2015)

When youngsters and teenagers sought a meeting with him, Kalam, who always wore a genial smile, not only obliged and gave them his precious time, but he also listened carefully to the ideas the kids had.

Soon after it was declared that Kalam would be the next president in 2002, he visited a modest school to deliver a speech. His security detail was minimal, and he didn't mind taking control of the situation when the power went off.

Speaking to around 400 students, Kalam ensured the power cut didn't cause any interruption. He walked right in the middle of the crowd and asked the students to surround him. He then spoke to them with his bare voice and delivered, like always, an inspiring keynote.

When a subordinate of Kalam at DRDO couldn't take his children to an exhibition due to work pressure, he surprised his subordinate and took the children instead, according to another published account.

And, who did president Kalam invite as the "presidential guests" to Kerala's Raj Bhavan during his first visit to the state after becoming the president? A roadside cobbler and owner of a very small hotel.

Kalam had spent a significant time as a scientist in Trivandrum and he invited a roadside cobbler -who was quite close to Kalam during his scientist days in Kerala; and the owner of the small hotel where he would often have his meals.



## TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR ABDUL KALAM

(From top, clockwise) School girls hold candles and portraits of former Indian President A P J Abdul Kalam during prayer ceremonies in Chennai and Amritsar; Kalam's body is being transported from the airport to his house in New Delhi; and Indian national flag flies at half mast at office building. Kalam, the 'People's President' of India, died on Monday after he suffered a massive cardiac arrest and collapsed while delivering a lecture at IIM Shillong.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## No one should be president for life: Obama

AFP, Addis Ababa

Barack Obama yesterday condemned African leaders who refuse to give up power and urged the continent to end "the cancer of corruption", in the first ever address to the African Union by a US president.

But Obama said the rest of the world also needed to change its approach to Africa by boosting fair trade and not just providing aid handouts, and vowed that the United States stood with the region to defeat terrorism and end conflict.

The speech marked the end of a short tour that has seen Obama visit Kenya, his father's birthplace, and Ethiopia, from where he flew out on Air Force One after the speech.

"Africa's democratic progress is also at risk when leaders refuse to step aside when their terms end," Obama said, drawing huge applause and cheers from some sections of the audience in the AU's Nelson Mandela hall.

"No one should be president for life," he said, explaining that he was personally relishing handing over office in 18 months.

"Now let me be honest with you: I do not understand this. I am in my second term... I love my work, but under our constitution, I cannot run again. I actually think I'm a pretty good president, I think if I ran again I could win, but I can't," he said.

"The point is I don't understand why people want to stay so long. Especially when they've got a lot of money," he said, drawing another huge cheer from the hall -- packed with diplomats but also many civil society activists.

## DEATH SENTENCE TO YAKUB MEMON

### Indian SC judges give split verdict

TNN, New Delhi

A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court is likely to decide 1993 Mumbai serial blasts convict Yakub Memon's fate today after a two-judge bench yesterday remained split.

In view of the split decision, the 2-judge bench referred the issue to the CJI for setting up an appropriate bench on Wednesday to hear Yakub's plea seeking stay of death warrant.

Memon, the lone death convict in 1993 Mumbai blasts case, in his plea had claimed he was suffering from schizophrenia since 1996 and has remained behind the bars for nearly 20 years, much more than a person serving life term has to spend in jail. He had sought commutation of death penalty, contending that a convict cannot be awarded life term and the death sentence for the same offence.

The apex court had on June 2, 2014 stayed the execution of Memon and referred his plea to a Constitution bench as to whether review petitions in death penalty cases be heard in an open court or in chambers.

Twelve coordinated blasts had rocked Bombay, as the city was then known, on March 12, 1993, leaving 257 dead and over 700 injured.



## Kurdish peace 'impossible'

Says Turkey PM; West, Saudi back Ankara on its anti-terror drive

AGENCIES

The Turkish president yesterday said that Turkey cannot continue the peace process with the Kurds amid attacks by Kurdish militants on Turkish targets.

Meanwhile, Nato yesterday gave its strong backing to Turkey's fight against "terrorism" at an emergency meeting called to discuss Ankara's strikes against Islamic State fighters and Kurdish rebels.

The talks in Brussels came as Erdogan insisted that Turkey would press on with the dual offensive against two mutually hostile groups despite questions about his country's motives.

Opening the meeting of ambassadors from all 28 Nato states, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the US-led military alliance was "following developments very closely and we stand in strong solidarity with our ally Turkey".

"Terrorism in all its forms can never be tolerated or justified. It is right and timely that we hold this meeting today to address the instability on Turkey's doorstep and on Nato's border," he said.

Turkey requested the meeting after a bloody suicide bombing it blamed on the Islamic State group in the south-eastern town of Suruc last week.

The attack, which killed 32 people, saw Turkey combine campaigns against Kurdish militants and IS into a broad "war on terror" even though the two groups are themselves bitterly opposed.

The United States and Turkey said Monday they had agreed to work together to create an IS-free zone northern Syria in a potentially game-changing accord.

But the attacks on the Kurds have surprised its Nato allies and raised questions over whether Turkey, fearful of seeing a Kurd state emerge on its southern border, is more interested in limiting Kurdish capabilities than in tackling IS in Iraq and Syria.

Nato allies have until now seen Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq as one of the most effective military options against ISIS as it continues its advance.

Erdogan insisted yesterday that Ankara would press its attacks to the

full.

"Any step back is out of the question. This is a process and this process will continue with the same determination," Erdogan told reporters before leaving on a visit to China.

He also said it would be impossible to continue peace efforts with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) amid continuing attacks inside Turkey.

Ankara, which along with its Western allies considers the PKK a terrorist organisation, launched peace negotiations with the group's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan in late 2012 but the two sides have yet to reach an accord.

After the Suruc attack, Turkey bombed ISIS targets in Syria and also PKK positions in northern Iraq.

Kurdish groups say Turkish forces have targeted them in Syria as well but Ankara has denied the claims.

Erdogan also said the creation of a safe zone in the north of war-torn Syria, free from ISIS, would help the



A Palestinian boy stands amidst the rubble of his home in al-Tufah, in the east of Gaza City on Monday, during a power outage. Residents of Gaza, home to 1.8 million people, have been experiencing up to 15 hours of electricity outage a day for the past two weeks due to fuel and power shortages.

PHOTO: AFP

## Air raids, clashes mar Yemen truce

AFP, Aden

A humanitarian truce in Yemen has failed to take hold after Saudi-led warplanes yesterday resumed strikes against Yemen rebels whose clashes with loyalists persisted, military sources said.

The five-day truce that began Monday was unilaterally declared by the pro-government Arab coalition to allow the delivery of desperately needed relief supplies.

The coalition, which mounted an air campaign against the Shiite Huthi rebels and their allies in late March, had reserved the right to hit any military movement by the insurgents.

Air strikes targeted rebels north of Aden, Yemen's second city, which was mostly recaptured by loyalists last week after four months of ferocious fighting, military sources said. Raids also struck rebels in nearby Lahj province.

Fighting around Aden has left 28 dead since Monday, including 22 rebels, two civilians and two pro-Hadi southern fighters, said city health chief Al-Khader Laswar.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Sunday made a plea for all sides to "agree to and maintain the humanitarian pause for the sake of all the Yemeni people".

The rebels said they were not consulted about the ceasefire.

## Tech leaders warn over 'killer robots'

AFP, Paris

A group of top tech leaders, including British scientist Stephen Hawking and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, yesterday issued a stern warning against the development of so-called killer robots.

Autonomous weapons, which use artificial intelligence to select targets without human intervention, have been described as "the third revolution in warfare, after gunpowder and nuclear arms," around 1,000 technology chiefs wrote in an open letter.

"The key question for humanity today is whether to start a global AI (artificial intelligence) arms race or to prevent it from starting," they wrote.

"If any major military power pushes ahead with AI weapon development, a global arms race is virtually inevitable," the letter continued.

The idea of an automated killing machine -- made famous



by Arnold Schwarzenegger's "Terminator" -- is moving swiftly from science fiction to reality, according to the scientists.

"The deployment of such systems is -- practically if not legally -- feasible within years, not decades," the letter said.

The scientists painted the Domsday scenario of autonomous weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, dictators or warlords hoping to carry out ethnic cleansing.

The group concluded with an appeal for a "ban on offensive autonomous weapons beyond meaningful human control."

The letter was presented at the opening of the 2015 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Buenos Aires.

There have been examples of weapons being stopped in their infancy. After UN-backed talks, blinding laser weapons were banned in 1998, before they ever hit the battlefield.



## World's oldest panda turns 37

AFP, Hong Kong

It may not be considered a landmark birthday for humans, but turning 37 yesterday made Hong Kong's Jia Jia the oldest-ever giant panda in captivity, and she celebrated in style. The equivalent of more than 100 years old in human terms, Jia Jia was presented with a towering birthday cake made from ice and fruit juice with the number 37 carved on top in her enclosure at the city's Ocean Park theme park. Jia Jia was born in the wild in Sichuan, China in 1978 and was given to Hong Kong in 1999 to mark the semi-autonomous city's handover by Britain two years earlier. The previous record was held by a male panda called Du Du, who was also caught in the wild and died in July 1999 at the age of 36 in a zoo in China's Hubei Province.

## US family finds gold treasure

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A family which has spent years hunting for treasure has found \$1million worth of gold artefacts in the wreckage of a fleet of 18th-century Spanish ships off the coast of Florida. Rick and Lisa Schmitt, their two children and daughter-in-law have used their salvage vessel Aarr Booty to scour the ocean for treasure for the past two summers. In June, Eric, the couple's 27-year-old son, found and recovered the treasure. The well-preserved hoard includes 51 gold coins of various denominations and 40 feet of ornate gold chains featuring olive blossoms. Under federal and state law, Florida will take possession of up to 20 percent of the find for display in a state museum.



## US hunter killed Cecil the lion

AFP, Harare

A conservation charity on Tuesday accused an American tourist of killing a much-loved Zimbabwean lion called "Cecil" on a hunt using a bow and arrow, adding that the animal had taken 40 hours to die. The lion, which was probably the world's most popular beast, was tempted outside the park using bait and then shot earlier this month. The Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force charity named the alleged trophy hunter as Walter Palmer from Minnesota, saying he had paid \$50,000 for the hunt. Cecil was described by safari operators as an "iconic" animal, who was recognised by many visitors to Hwange for his distinctive black mane.

