

OBITUARY



D.K. Dutt
(1931-2010)

With the passing away of Dr. Dilip Kumar Dutt, former Chairman of Central Ground Water Board, in the wee hours of 28th July, 2010, the country has lost the tallest of its peers in Hydrogeology. Born on 2nd July 1931 at Lucknow, D.K.Dutt, popularly known as “D.K.” or “Dutt sab” to his friends and colleagues, did his M.Sc (Geology) from Lucknow University in 1953, and obtained Ph.D from Jadavpur University in 1977. Starting his career as Geological Assistant in Geological Survey of India in 1954, he had his initiation in groundwater studies in the US aided Technical Co-operation Mission. He served GSI in various capacities from Assistant Geologist to Senior Geologist before joining CGWB in 1972. He took over the reins of its Eastern Regional office at Calcutta, as its Director from 1974 to 1979, followed by a tenure of seven years in Rural Electrification Corporation as Technical Chief, rising to the rank of General Manager. But in 1986, Dutt rejoined CGWB as its Chairman, lending his outstanding leadership till his superannuation in 1989.

During his tenure as Chairman, CGWB, the organisation saw multi-layered growth. It played a vital role in the success of Technology Mission on Drinking Water. Dutt steered the country through one of the worst droughts in 1987 overcoming food grains and drinking water crisis relying solely on groundwater development. But he firmly believed in the policy of ‘groundwater management’ for its long term sustainability. The first ever scientific estimation of groundwater resources and irrigation potential from groundwater was carried out by CGWB jointly with the States, under his active guidance. UN aided Kasai Subarnarekha basin Ground Water Studies Project (1986-90) was his brain child. He also led SIDA assisted Coastal Kerala Project during 1986-1990.

Among many distinctions achieved in his long career, the most notable were the Hydrogeological Map of India (1:5 million scale, 1976), Hydrogeological Map of India (1:2 million scale, 1990), and Hydrogeological Atlases of West

Bengal, Orissa, Rajasthan, Karnataka. The Hydrogeological Map (1:5 million) earned CGWB the coveted Membership of the International Map Commission. Another significant achievement was his unraveling the layered saltwater-freshwater aquifer system and potentials of its development as source of freshwater in the cyclone prone eastern coast of India.

Dutt was a prolific writer and authored a large number of publications and reports, including GSI Records and Bulletins. His unique contribution was a book on ‘Groundwater Development and Management in India’, published by Rural Electrification Corporation in 1982. He was Editor of the Journal, ‘Indian Geohydrology’ of the Indian Geohydrologists’ Association (Calcutta), during 1972-1983.

Even after his superannuation from CGWB, his scientific zeal and abilities did not wane. Hydrogeology remained his passion. He pursued his career vigorously as a leading Groundwater Consultant of repute - in World Bank funded Hydrology Project, in Indo-Australian Aeromagnetic surveys for groundwater etc. Dutt played a crucial role as Member Secretary of the Swaminathan Committee for Reorganisation of CGWB (1990). He was an architect of National Hydrology Project.

A strict disciplinarian, Dutt was a warm hearted man who always kept welfare of his colleagues, friends in his mind. An avid reader of books, he had keen interest in literature, as also in the field of sports.

Deeply mourned by his wife, son, daughter, son in law, daughter in law and grandson, as also by his friends and colleagues, Dutt will be ever remembered as a hydrogeoscientist par excellence and a multi-faceted personality. He left an indelible imprint in the growth of hydrogeological science in India and a priceless legacy for his posterity.

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