

All India People's Science Network

Condolence Resolution at the passing of Professor Mahanta Kalita.

All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) expresses deep grief at the passing of Professor Mahanta Kumar Kalita, a pioneer and leader of People's Science Movement and AIPSN, who played an important role in nucleating many a People's Science Movement organizations in the North East of India and bringing them to the AIPSN. Dr. Kalita passed away in Guwahati on 13th April, 2020. Due to the lockdown, we are sure, many would not have been able to pay their last respects at the funeral, to this many faceted personality and a pillar of People's Science Movement.

A plasma physicist by training and a dedicated teacher, Professor Kalita was deeply involved in research even at a time when regular teaching duties in under-graduate colleges would not have left much time and leisure to pursue scientific research. He thus tried to make use of opportunities by visiting different institutes in the country. While performing these teaching duties and research he also dedicated himself in the democratic movement of college teachers, in Assam.

Professor Kalita had a network of contacts in different places in the country. This proved to be useful when the Institute of Advanced Studies in Science and Technology (IASST) was set up in Guwahati. The institute was the dream of many academics in Assam and North East India. It was inaugurated by Professor Dorothy Hodgkin, Nobel Laureate and a collaborator of John Desmond Bernal, on 3rd November, 1979. The institute began with a skeletal staff, limited facilities and the initial infra-structure was provided by The Assam Science Society, with which Professor Kalita was intimately associated. The institute (under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India) has flourished since then in many areas of research; in the initial phase Professor Kalita would send out feelers for people to join whenever a vacancy arose or at least coax people to come as a short term visitor and give lectures.

Even though the PSMs as organised body emerged in the late 1980's , many would recall that the importance of such a movement was already in Professor Kalita's mind, well before that. Thus, when the massive exercise of Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ, in 1987) was planned, Dr. Kalita found a platform that he was always dreaming of. He thus flung himself in organizing the BJVJ in the North Eastern states, bringing a stream of volunteers and organizations. He was the North Eastern Secretary of the BJVJ.

After the BJVJ , when the different participating organizations decided to firm up their work by forming the AIPSN, Dr. Mahanta Kalita played an important role, in his state. He was a living link between all the organizations in Assam. When the Sabka Desh Hamara Desh programme was launched, Prof Mahanta Kumar Kalita gladly accepted to be an adviser.

We are sure that the AIPSN will miss him, as would others in many other walks of life. Those, who knew him would always cherish memories of this self effacing but inspiring person.

14th April, 2020.