

OBITUARY

Ram Charan Rajak passed away in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh on 2nd Feb 2017 at the age of 75. He came from an ordinary Indian family with no background in science but contributed significantly in the field of mycology due to his dedication and hard work and transferred his interest of fungi to so many of his students. He was born on 4th April 1942 in Madhya Pradesh. He stood first in Public Service Commission (PSC) examination of MP whereby he became lecturer in Botany at Govt. Science College, Jabalpur. He completed his PhD in Botany in 1972 at Rani Durgavati (RD) University under the guidance of Prof GP Agarwal on “Taxonomy of *Colletotrichum*” wherein he merged several spp to few. He contributed significantly in exploring the fungal diversity of Madhya Pradesh especially in and around Jabalpur. He described one (1) new genus and fifty new (50) species of tropical fungi during his research career. His work involved basic and applied aspects of various groups of fungi including entomogenous, keratinophilic, plant pathogenic fungi and mushrooms. During his tenure he supervised 40 PhD and 2 DSc students. He published nearly 200 research papers in peer reviewed journals and edited 4 books. He completed 14 research projects funded by Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), University Grants Commission (UGC), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Madhya Pradesh Council of Science & Technology (MPCST), Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Department of Biotechnology (DBT). He was an avid reader and devoted most of his time in his room reading at the University, even devoting few hours on Sunday. I joined his lab in 1999 as a Junior Research Fellow in one of his project *Biodiversity of entomopathogenic, keratinophilic fungi and yeasts* funded by DBT, New Delhi. During my doctoral studies when he was heading the Department of Biosciences at RD University he had several official commitment but still he was always accessible to discuss science. He was an able administrator and was known for his thorough approach in dealing with problems either academic or administrative. He was Fellow of Society for Mycology and Plant Pathology, Indian Phytopathological Society, Indian Botanical Society, and sectional President of Plant Sciences in the 92th Indian Science Congress held in 2005 at Nirma University, Ahmedabad. He was life member of several societies-Indian Science Congress Association and Society for Basic and Applied Mycology which he started in 2002. Prof Rajak hardly visited any foreign country except Australia during 1990 when he presented his research work in International Colloquium on Invertebrate Pathology (Adelaide University) and Monash University Melbourne. He was a sportsperson and has many accolades in football and in later years' lawn tennis. In fact during his early years he was offered to play for famous football club of India *Mohan Bagaan* but he chose academics over sports upon Dr GP Agarwal's suggestion. He was part of MP state's football team for Santosh Trophy; IFA



Prof. R.C. Rajak
(04.04.1942 - 02.02.2017)

Shield, Calcutta; Rovers Cup; DCM football tournament and was twice captain of state football team. He was popularly called as *Ram Charan* in football circles during his football days as well as veterans of the game especially in India. Many people remembers and he shared this with the author, one of his famous flying goal he scored that made him popular among not only players who were playing but the Jabalpur audiences' that use to watch football in Shivaji ground in Sadar Bazaar (Opp. Archies Galary), Jabalpur. I personally miss him deeply at this stage because he would have been so happy to see the uncovering of so many undiscovered diversity/forms of keratinophilic fungi that he was so fond off. He is survived by his wife Saroj, two daughters (Asha and Puja), a son Akshay and two lovely grandchildren Pratik and Damya.

Rahul Sharma

National Centre for Microbial Resource (NCMR),
National Centre for Cell Science, NCCS Complex, Pune
University Campus, Ganeshkhind, Pune, Maharashtra,
India