

## OBITUARY



**Apurba Kanta Choudhury**  
(1938-2012)

Apurba Kanta Choudhury, formerly Director, Geological Survey of India, and a legendary figure in Engineering Geology in India, passed away at his Kolkata residence after a massive cardiac arrest on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, deeply mourned by his family, friends and admirers.

Born on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1938 at Kharagpur (West Bengal), Choudhury did his graduation with Geology Honors from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack in 1956, and M.Sc in Geological Sciences from Jadavpur University, Kolkata in 1958. He joined Geological Survey of India as Assistant Geologist in 1960, and served Engineering Geology Division of GSI throughout his long illustrious career spanning over 36 years till his superannuation as Director in 1996. Ever since his joining Jaldhaka Hydrel Project as resident geologist in 1962, Choudhury had been intimately associated with the development of hydroelectricity in the unstable earthquake and landslide prone sub-Himalayan terrain of North Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in Eastern and North-Eastern Regions of India. Confronted with the problems of slope stability in this unstable zone, Choudhury was ever ready with immediate, simple and practical remedial measures. His resourceful, practical and intelligent approach towards solution to problems that often cropped up during construction of dams, tunnels, roads, bridges in difficult terrains deeply impressed project engineers, many of whom became his lifelong friends.

In his long chequered career A.K.Choudhury deftly handled a variety of engineering geology problems. He was also associated with a number of projects in Darjeeling Himalaya, namely Little Rangit project, Neorakhola & Lava Water Supply projects, as also Dhanikari project in the Andamans, Loktak Hydrel Project in Manipur, Tenughat Dam across the Damodar in the Hazaribagh district and Subarnarekha Multi-purpose project in Bihar. He was also actively involved in Purulia Pump Storage Scheme in Ayodhya Hills of Purulia district. He worked extensively on landslides in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and

Darjeeling Hills. He served as Member Secretary of the Land Slide Hazard Zonation Committee of GSI.

A.K.Choudhury was deputed by the Government of India on UNDP Training Scheme on soft ground tunneling technique in USA in 1987, where he studied underground railway tunnels.

Following global trend in water resources development sans adverse environmental and social impacts of large dams and reservoirs, Choudhury emphasized efficacy of “Run of the River” schemes in the Himalayan terrain where a number of environment friendly low diversion weirs could replace a single large dam to generate electricity. In Peninsular India he advocated inter-basin transfer of water for its equitable distribution from surplus to deficit regions. He suggested development of hydro-power at canal fall areas and through Pumped Storage Schemes.

Even after his superannuation, he continued to be associated with several projects as a consultant, notable among them being Subansiri Hydrel Project (Arunachal), Ramam and Tista Hydrel Projects of North Bengal.

He was awarded Ph.D (Science) degree by Jadavpur University in 2001 for his dissertation on “Engineering Geological Problems Related to Development of Hydro-electric Projects in Eastern Himalayas and their geotechnical evaluation”.

He was a founder member of the Indian Society of Engineering Geology (ISEG), life members of Mining, Geological and Metallurgical Institute, and several other scientific and professional societies.

Loved and admired by one and all for his cheerful and amiable disposition, ready wit and wide experience in his professional field, his sudden demise is an irreparable loss to his family and friends, and leaves a void in the Engineering Geology fraternity.

*Formerly Geological Survey of India  
Kolkata*

A.K. MAJUMDAR  
CHINMOY PAL