

## **Science communicators to be awarded on National Science Day**

Science communicators across different media who have dedicated their lives to the popularisation of science will be awarded by President Ram Nath Kovind during the National Science Day celebrations at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on February 28.

The awards include National Award for Outstanding Efforts in Science & Technology Communication through Print Media including Books and Magazines which will be **Dr Suryamani Behera** from Odisha & **Dr Amiya Rajbongshi** from Assam.

The National Award for Outstanding Efforts in Science & Technology Popularization among Children will be received by **Sh. Deepak Sharma** from **Uttar Pradesh** and an organisation **KisanSewaSansthan** also from Uttar Pradesh.

**Dr Mahesh Verma** from National Capital Territory (NCT), **Dr S. Nagarathinam** from **Madurai Kamaraj University**, Tamil Nadu, & **Dr Rajendra Kumar** from NCT of Delhi will receive the National Award for Outstanding Efforts in Science & Technology Communication through Innovative and Traditional methods.

**Dr Uma Kumarn** from NCT of Delhi will be awarded the National Award for Outstanding Efforts in Science & Technology Communication in the Electronic Medium. The monetary compensation for each of these awards is Rs.2,00,000.

The awards are being given following the tradition of Department of Science & Technology (DST) to honour scientists and science communicators on National Science Day (NSD) on 28 February. Every year, National Science day is celebrated with lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions, quiz programmes, and other activities for students as well as masses. This time the celebrations have been organised in Vigyan Bhawan and President Ram Nath Kovind will present several awards for science communication and popularization as well as for women scientists. Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Science & Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Sciences and Smriti Irani, Cabinet Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development will also grace the occasion. The focal theme of NSD-2020 is "**Women in Science**".

## **Brief Profile of science communication and popularisation awardees**

**Prof. Suryamani Behra**, a retired professor and popular science writer, has been recognized as an excellent popular writer - both in Odia and English languages – and has been continuously writing articles and books for more than thirty years. He has published more than forty-one books and more than a thousand published articles. His latest books “Vigyan Ru Gyana”, “Jantra Karuchi Mantra”, “Vigyan Sahitya Darpan”, “Bigyan Mela” and books on Medicinal Plants cultivation have become very popular. Articles on Food Processing and Preservation are his notable contributions which are followed by many people as help to a cottage industry. He has also established *Janapriya Vigyan Manch* to impart training to budding popular science writers & Journalists.

**Dr Amiya Rajbongshi's** science communication efforts are extended for the dissemination of science to masses through print media and popular talks. A regular writer for almost all science magazines and prestigious newspapers of Assam, she has published 396 scientific articles and authored popular science books from NBT, India, Assam Publication Board and Assam Science Society. As President of Lakhimpur Science Society and of Assam Science Writers' Association, besides organizing many programmes for science communication, she has published 12 books on popular science and co-authored 25 books. She also wrote on Lives & Activities of Nobel Laureates on Physiology or Medicine in three volumes.

**Deepak Sharma**, a science teacher in N.A.S. Inter College, Meerut is popular among students for last 30years for making science easier and interesting by relating it to day-to-day life and through activities. Science-based reality show-Vigyan Ghar and science channel 'Vigyan AaoKarkeSikhe' and his own science magazine are some of his key achievements. The experiments for measuring the distance between the Earth and the Sun during transit of Venus and the circumference of the Earth and Analemma Sun dial made him very popular. He also continues to inspire people to work as a resource person for science communication.

**Kisan Sewa Sansthan (KSS)** is Uttar Pradesh based a pioneer organization that develops and spreads scientific temper among children. It spreads scientific awareness using a variety of unique tools and techniques. With the central aim of benefitting people, they have reached the masses through their training, campaigns, lectures, orientations and workshops on specific initiatives like communicating science through puppetry and explaining the science behind so-called miracles. KSS has encouraged students from villages to visit the Science Express of DST at various railway stations in UP. It popularized science among millions of rural and urban children through Science Express, science fairs and melas, science debates, talks, essay competitions, science inspires tours, community radio programmes, notably *Chalo Gaon Ki Aur* and also the Mobile Science Exhibition Bus (MSE) for school students and people at large.

**Prof. Mahesh Verma** is the Vice-Chancellor of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University. He has been instrumental in promoting the scientific temperament and awareness among students, youth, health professionals and community at large as he has organized Dental Health Melas for over 25 years, dental camps in schools and underserved areas and initiated Mobile Dental Clinic Project with six mobile Dental vans for rural areas in 3 districts of Delhi to bring about awareness for masses. Dr Verma has authored many books and appeared in more than 150 programmes on TV, Radio and contributed press articles and media reports bringing education and scientific awareness about dental health. He established the Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences for education, patient care and awareness. As past President of the Indian Dental Association, Dr Verma led over 75,000 Dental professionals in community-directed projects such as *Tobacco cessation, Oral Cancer Awareness & many more.*

**Dr S. Nagarathinam** who worked in popular Tamil Daily *Dinamalar*, and wrote science articles regularly since 1996 studied Science Communication. He has been tirelessly connecting the scientific world with common people, particularly through innovative and traditional methods. He introduced a Daily Science Column, published till today. He has been popularizing and communicating Science &Technology related to water bodies, rivers, tanks, ponds and eco sites among youth and communities. His efforts culminated in the pan India mobilization of Groups of

Experts & volunteers, especially the Eco Vision Indica, to help protect natural ecological resources. These efforts also resulted in thousands of seed plantings of Palmyra Palm -an eco-friendly and alternative resource to plastics. Overall, he made outstanding efforts to using ecological places as a creative medium. He has successfully built peoples' everyday understanding of nature and communicated science & technology of a wide transdisciplinary range and in-depth knowledge as a people's professor through Field Immersive Innovative Models, practices, outreach, fostering communities of learning, and special interest groups, for a far-reaching visible impact.

**Prof Rajendra Kumar**, an agricultural scientist, has made an outstanding contribution in the popularization of science & technology through several innovative & traditional approaches. He has published 7 books, 116 research articles, more than 100 popular articles, 28 volumes of newsletters, more than 500 newspaper articles, delivered more than 100 television-radio talks along with more than 150 conference lectures, numerous poster presentations, and more than 500 public lectures. He popularised science among children, women, illiterate elderly people in rural, urban & sub-urban localities by organizing more than 180 *Goshthees*, corner or roadside meetings & Chaupals in farmers fields, village ponds, fish ponds, grain threshing places, sugarcane cutting places, cattle sheds, Primary/Junior/High schools, through UPAAS, ISGBRD, SRDA, SSSD, etc.in English, Hindi & Vernacular languages leaving very large impact across the state/nation. He has been instrumental in motivating students, teachers, scientists and the general public in popular science reading, writing, and utilization at learning centres, and outreach activities and created a significant spread over 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh demonstrating a typical "Boom– Bust" cycle.

**Dr Uma Kumar** has created an indelible mark in the area of popularising medical science amongst the masses through electronic media. She has participated in more than 100 health programmes on national TV channels and radio, apart from writing innumerable articles in magazines and newspapers about rheumatic diseases, and publishing easy to understand booklets in Hindi & English in the electronic form to increase awareness about autoimmune diseases, air pollution, role of physical activities and right postures. She has delivered more than 300 lectures for physicians, specialists, schools, and the general public to increase awareness about non-communicable diseases and conducted workshops in schools and organizations involved in rehabilitation of underprivileged youth to propagate health science and awareness about musculoskeletal health. She participated in medical camps in tribal and remote areas like Leh Ladakh, Kargil, UP, Chhattisgarh etc.