

OBITUARY



Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Khan S.I.
(1953-2019)

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Khan S.I., the 17th Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi and the founding director of the Institute of Sustainable Halophyte Utilization (ISHU), died on May 04, 2019 owing to a heart ailment at the age of about 67 years. He was a world-renowned botanist and pioneer of halophyte-biology in Pakistan. He spent over 44 years in teaching and research. He received M.Sc. from University of Karachi (1974), Ph.D. from Ohio University, USA (1985) and D.Sc. from University of Karachi (2010). Prof. Khan served the University of Karachi as a regular faculty from 1975–2012, as Vice Chancellor from 2017-2019 and as a Visiting Professor in several Universities of China, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, and USA. He also served as Scientific Advisor to Vice Chairperson, Qatar Foundation, Doha. President of Pakistan awarded Dr. Khan with the “Pride of Performance” on 14th August, 2001 and Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 2007 in recognition of his scientific contributions. He was an elected fellow of Pakistan Academy of Sciences, World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) and Islamic Academy of Sciences. Higher Education Commission, Pakistan, accorded him the title of “Distinguished National Professor” and Pakistan Academy of Sciences granted its highest award as “Distinguished Professor of the year 2008”. In 2009, Prof. Khan became the first ever UNESCO Chair-holder in Sustainable Halophyte Utilization. Prof. Khan edited 13 books and published 397 research papers with a cumulative impact factor more than 250; RG index of 40.65; h-index of 64 and i10-index of 221. Prof. Khan has completed 40 research projects on various aspects of salt tolerance in plants. The quality and impact of his research can be gauged by more than 15500 citations in international publications by peers in the field. Prof. Khan’s most noted contribution was establishment of a patented cropping system for the production of non-conventional fodder by using saline resources, which can ensure food security in the water-scarce regions such as Thar desert and Balochistan, if implemented properly. He assumed the charge of the Vice Chancellor of University of Karachi during January 2017 and was instrumental in bringing fundamental changes in admissions, examinations, security, recruitment, financial management and promoting research culture. This contributed in changing the direction and uplift of the university standards. Besides his personal achievements, Prof. Khan trained and motivated number of researchers to continue his legacy of scientific excellence towards ensuring food security for future generations. Services of Prof. Khan for research and higher education will always be remembered and he will be missed as an inspiring teacher, scientist of high-caliber, mentor of many and a wonderful human being. His sudden demise is truly an end of an era. May he rest in peace, Ameen.

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