

HISTORIC BRAIN AWARENESS INITIATIVE AT PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA IN ASSOCIATION WITH NATIONAL BRAIN RESEARCH CENTRE (NBRC)

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'I am a Brain, Watson. The rest of me is mere appendix

With the quote in mind, and the dire need for awareness about the master organ of the human body, a handful of students and faculty of Presidency University and **National Brain Research Centre (NBRC)** set in motion the historic Brain Awareness Initiative at this premier centre of learning. The program ran for four consecutive days, starting from March 9, 2015 to March 12, 2015, and featured a lot of exciting 'brainy' stuff.

On the first day, that is, the 9th of March the program was kickstarted by two talks from NBRC faculty. The two speakers were **Dr. Sourav Banerjee**, who spoke of wiring in the brain, and **Dr. Arpan Banerjee**, who enlightened the audience with a much applauded talk on Neuro-cognition. While the first talk touched the technical lines, the second talk was a wonderful rendition of common-life experimentations and deductions about the

emerging research discipline of Neuro-cognition. The students seemed to be quite influenced and drawn towards the exciting world of the brain. **Dr. Piyali Mukherjee**, from the 'Brain Matters' (an outreach program to spread awareness and emphasize the importance of brain research) team says, "Our basic intention is to popularize science among the public, and arouse the interest of more people towards scientific approaches. We started out as a handful of people, trying to educate the school students about the mental illnesses and various other aspects of the brain, and, fortunately, have increased our team to approximately 35 people. We've been getting good response."



Submitted by: Sayantan Datta

Presidency University witnessed the second day being held in the majestic Presi Greens, where the 'Brain Discovery Fair' was held. The fair boasted of about nine stalls, and was inaugurated by a very impressive performance by the differently-abled kids of Manovikas Kendra. They put up a beautiful show of music and dance, and got the audience tapping their feet with them. In the words of **Dr. Madhura Lohia** from the Manovikas Kendra, "These children are immensely talented. A few disabilities cannot disable them from following their dreams, and we're just trying to help them out a little bit." The stalls put up a vibrant show, with one stall talking of the basics of Neurobiology, the other one sporting a 'beautiful' Ms. Frankenstein, who lobes lights up according to the sensory systems. There was another stall talking of Diseases, which included a host of diseases ranging from Brain Tumor and cancer to schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, Dissociative Identity Disorder, etc. Ferrofluid-based Target Therapy was also a part of

the stall. The next stall spoke of the sense organs. The team believes that science needs interdisciplinary approach, and hence, students from the department of Sociology and Physics had also put up a stall which spoke of Dreams, Emotions and the psycho-social aspect of the brain. Another very interesting stall was the Games Stall, which saw a huge footfall, and the ongoing mobile quiz, which was a fun-factor. Various schools had been invited for the event, and Future Foundation School had also brought with it a beautiful model. There was also an ongoing essay competition and some of the entries really awestruck the judges.



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The third day, March 11, was entitled 'Brain Wave', and Prof. Sugata Mitra, the famous personality behind the 'Hole in the Wall' Experiment, and winner of TED Prize 2013, the first prize of its kind, had been invited to give a talk on the 'Future of Learning'. The talk spoke of his experiments with learning, and SOLE, i.e., Self Organized Learning Environments. It was hugely inspiring, and an interactive session concluded the day.

The final day of the venture was a more open-ended forum, where three documentaries from the Manovikas Kendra curated archives were screened in the AJC Bose



Auditorium. The first one spoke of a story about a boy and his cat, the next one spoke about how differently-abled, so called 'abnormal' people think of politics, and the last one was a documentary on a boy suffering from Asperger's Syndrome. A very interesting open-house interaction followed on the topic 'What is Normal?' In the words of Kingshuk Chakraborty, "Society has this defence mechanism where they classify people into classes like 'normal' and 'abnormal'. A society is like a straight line; if I fall into that line, I'll just be one of the infinite points." With this, the exciting week came to a closure, but not an end.



Perception & Symmetry

