

**Institutional Visits to
National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) &
IISER-Kolkata
25 April 2011**

Report by Dr Ajay Pillai & Dr Megha

Attendees: -

Committee Members: Professor Mike Turner, Professor Noel Buckley, Professor Helen Skaer, Professor Douglas Young

Staff: Professor Anuradha Lohia, Dr Megha, Dr Naresh Sharma, Dr Ajay Pillai, Dr Madhuri Dutta, Dr Ponnari Gottipati.

The Senior/Intermediate Fellowship interviews for 2011 were conducted in Kolkata. The India Alliance used this opportunity to visit the NIBMG and Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), along with the Committee Members. Through the day long visit the India Alliance wished to achieve two objectives: a) expose Committee Members to how new institutions in India were being developed, and b) create awareness of the India Alliance schemes and processes.

Our morning visit was to NIBMG. Situated at Kalyani (about a 1.5 hour drive from Kolkata), NIBMG is an autonomous institution established by the Government of India. Our host, Professor Partha Majumder started the visit by providing an introduction to the creation and vision of the Institute. The focus of NIBMG is to perform cutting edge biomedical genomics research that would not only inform basic molecular biology but also have translational benefits. Departments and facilities have been organized to achieve this synergy. The introduction was followed by a tour of the premises, currently restricted to the 3rd floor of a Tuberculosis Hospital. The permanent structure is expected to come up adjacent to this hospital.

While the Committee toured the premises, the grants team staff discussed queries from students and faculty members regarding their eligibility to our schemes; many used this opportunity to discuss their cases personally. We concluded the morning session with a discussion led by Professor Lohia, and included faculty from NIBMG and our Committee. Professor Lohia conveyed the mission of the India Alliance and urged prospective applicants to use the opportunity to propose cutting edge science. After lunch, the visiting party split. Professor Turner and Professor Young, along with Dr Megha and Dr Naresh Sharma continued to be at NIBMG, while the rest of the team departed for IISER Kolkata. This was followed by science talks from both these Members. The attendance by students and faculty was high; many questions followed talks by the Members.

Situated about 10 mins drive from NIBMG, IISER-Kolkata is also operating from a transit campus. Established in 2006 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), IISER Kolkata is one of five institutes set up by the Government of India to bolster science education and research. These institutes are the first in India where research and teaching are going to receive equal precedence. After a brief meeting with Professor Shushanta Dattagupta, Director, the team was given a tour of the premises. This was followed by science talks from Professors Buckley and Skaer. Unfortunately, the attendance at these talks was dismal because of exams.

The NIBMG team joined the rest of the team at IISER after their talks for tea. The visit was concluded with a "Learning from Choices" session. This module is a part of the India Alliance's Science & Communication Workshop and is intended to expose students and young faculties to choices (professional & personally) made by successful scientists. Through their experience it is hoped that young

researchers would be inspired to be bold and follow their initiative. All senior professors participated in this session.

Committee Members and the Staff were grateful to their hosts for their time and effort in organizing the visits.