

# Illness to wellness, a mental message

## A STAFF REPORTER

Psychiatrists and psychologists tried to bust the myths surrounding mental illness at a panel discussion on Thinking Beyond the Myths & Stigma — Mental Wellness.

The panel discussion is part of the Calcutta Management Association and AddLife Caring Minds presents Good Health is Good Business, in association with **The Telegraph**.

The panelists said the perception that mental illness is incurable has to change. "The view hasn't changed much partly because doctors and so-



**The participants of Good Health is Good Business.**

Picture by Bishwarup Dutta

cial workers failed to spread the message that treatment is available," said consultant psychiatrist J.R. Ram.

Talking about parents of children with special needs, the speakers said their mental health requirements are no dif-

ferent from "other parents".

Sudha Kaul, founder-trustee of the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, believes "other parents" have an important role to play. "They can be the advocates for destigmatising people with mental health issues."

Minu Budhia, the founder and director of AddLife Caring Minds, said as a parent of a "special child", she had to face problems when her daughter started going to school.

"Not necessarily the most knowledgeable person can be a good teacher. A teacher should not be judgmental," said Anuradha Lohia, vice-chancellor, Presidency University.

"Students are like matchsticks," said the moderator, neurosurgeon Sandip Chatterjee.

"There are some you need to strike once to generate light, others you have to strike more than once. But when they shine

they produce the same light."

Parents, too, need to be equally conscious and should only make realistic promises to their children, said Nilanjana Sanyal, professor and psychoanalyst, department of psychology, Calcutta University.

When asked about the level of mental stress an American youngster faces, US consul-general Helen LaFave said: "School principals here are very concerned about the pressure kids face. The US is definitely a very competitive place.... But I have never seen in my experience in the US, the competitiveness I see in Indians."