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IIT

INDIAN
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

☎ 0542 2366676: e-mail : pro.ppc@itbhu.ac.in

कुलसचिव कार्यालय
(प्रेस एवं प्रचार प्रकोष्ठ)



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Talking humanoid robot answers queries with ease

Sophia A Huge Draw At IIT-BHU Fest

Binay Singh | TNN

Varanasi: It seemed like a casual talk by a guest, but the curiosity and wonder on the faces of the mediapersons and engineering students of IIT-BHU throwing questions emanated from the fact that the speaker wasn't a human, but a humanoid robot — Sophia.

The audience was mesmerized to see a robot talking like a human being, fielding questions from mediapersons and engineering students and giving to the point answers.

Sophia, a humanoid robot developed by a Hong Kong-based company, has become a centre of attraction at Technex'20 — the three-day annual techno-management fest of IIT (BHU) that began on Fri-



Sophia (above) has become the centre of attraction at Technex'20

day. Sophia responded just like a human, and her body gestures added emphasis to her answers, though the questions being put up were pre-scripted. Being a robot, she could answer only those questions, which were already programmed by a team of her developers.



Sanjay Gupta

ve already developed 43 vaccines, commonly used in hospitals, and they can be helpful in coronavirus as well. She also responded queries on her utility, like how could she help her human friends in overcoming stress or anxiety. The audience popped questions, like if it is possible to control human emotions through robotics, in what ways can robotics be helpful in solving social complexities, how can she help address the growing menace of water and air pollution, and also if humanoid robots can be hacked. Sophia answered all questions deftly.

Sophia, developed by Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics was activated in February 2016, and made her first public appearance in March 2016 in US. In October 2017, Sophia became a Saudi Arabian citizen, the first robot to receive citizenship of any country. In November 2017, Sophia was named the UN's first ever Innovation Champion, and is the first non-human to be given any UN title.

Draped in a yellow sari, Sophia first appeared before IIT (BHU) students in an interactive programme on Friday night. On being asked if she could use her artificial intelligence to help medical researchers in developing an antidote to novel coronavirus, Sophia said scientists ha-