



Auroville Outreach

A newsletter from Auroville universal township

Special issue - February 2002



Auroville's Future



European Commission



Asia Urbs Programme



Auroville Universal Township



City of Cologne



City of Venice

Auroville Innovative Urban Management

a partnership programme co-financed by the asia-urbs programme of the european commission

The Asia Urbs programme is an interesting project designed by the European Commission to bring nations of the European Union closer to those in Asia. It encourages exchange between the two areas, and provides substantial opportunities for working together with the aim of improving living and environmental conditions for the residents of urban areas in Asia.

Auroville's Future, the Auroville Town Planning Office, has presented a project within the framework of Asia Urbs named 'Auroville Innovative Urban Management'. The cities of Venice and Cologne have accepted to be the city partners in this project, and the European Commission has approved it on 10th April 2001.

Main features of the project:

Project holder: Auroville's Future

European partners: City of Venice & City of Cologne

Total budget: Euro 732,728
(Rs.2.91 crores)

Total duration of project: 2 years

Starting date: 10th April 2001

The activities to be undertaken within this project are the following, in which already 6 months of preparatory work has been completed.

Centre for urban development studies, research and planning

The very first major development in this context is the creation of a centre for urban development studies, research and planning. In

the overall scheme of the project, this is to be a building where research and exchanges in the field of urban planning and development can take place.

We started the actual construction of the Centre at the end of April 2001 and named the building 'Town Hall Annex'. It is the very first building in the future administrative area of Auroville, located near the central Matrimandir, the "soul of Auroville". It is quite elaborate, and will include the planning offices for Auroville's urban management groups (planning, development, infrastructure, etc), a conference room for 100 people, and a multimedia centre cum library with books, videos, CDs and specialized magazines & other publications open to the public for consultation and research. The Centre will provide facilities and documentation for individual research for Indian and European students on topics related to urbanisation, sustainable growth of cities and the diffusion of appropriate technologies in city development.

We anticipate that the Town Hall Annex building will be completed by March 2002, after which four workshops are planned to take place there during the ensuing year, entirely organized by Auroville. As the main idea behind Asia Urbs focuses on the collaboration with - and reaching out to - Asian cities, these workshops are the first steps in that direction. They will be particularly addressed to district and civic officers from Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, and special efforts are being made to have officers of neighbouring areas attending. The platform thus created will provide all parties concerned with space to discuss proposals and common issues in light of the various topics and experiences dealt with in the workshops.

Living up to Asia Urbs' wider scope, the workshops will also be attended by experts from the European cities



Panoramic view of Town Hall Annex under construction



The Planning Office, Auroville's Future

of Cologne and Venice. Finally, a fifth workshop in this series will be held in Cologne in Germany, with travel and accommodation cost of the local officers attending arranged by Auroville.

The workshops will be mainly centred around the following topics:

- Waste management
- Water management, water catchment protection and management, waste water management
- Energy planning at municipal level, energy saving and renewable energy diffusion at urban level
- Traffic management and alternative transport
- Innovative town planning.

Auroville is already quite experienced in holding such workshops, and is increasingly becoming a dynamizing entity for its immediate bioregion, therefore also for Tamil Nadu and India at large, particularly in regard to environmental matters. It is our hope and conviction that these new workshops will strengthen our links with our neighbours, establishing firm contacts for ongoing collaboration.

Publications

As a support to the workshops and other activities of the project, and also as part of its outreach involving dissemination of information on its various activities, several booklets, brochures and pamphlets are in the pipeline. During the gradual unfolding of the Asia Urbs project a regular newsletter will be sent to some 800 addressees all over India.

An Internet page where we share all our activities under Asia Urbs will also be maintained.

As an additional part of the outreach and diffusion effort, an exhibition will be held in the town of Venice, dedicated to Auroville and its activities, undertaken within the Asia Urbs programme. The exhibition will consist of elaborate panels, publications and video presentations, and will take place throughout the entire month of June 2002, coinciding with the renowned 'Biennale' of Architecture.

In the year 2000 the residents of Auroville and the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation gave their support to the 'Perspective Master Plan for Auroville', which was later approved by the Ministry of Urban Development of the Government of India. This perspective plan now needs detailing through further studies. Therefore, under this same Asia Urbs project, the "Auroville Detailed Master Plan" will be elaborated upon in five successive phases: 1) collection of data, 2) analysis of data, 3) elaboration of data & proposals, 4) participation & discussion with the citizens and interested groups, and 5) completion of the final proposal.

The Master Plan will be worked out first and foremost with the participation of many Aurovilians, who will collaborate with experts sent through Asia Urbs partners abroad. Also Indian consultant town planners and engineers have been hired for the duration of the project. Altogether it promises to be an inspiring and productive time, and we're very much looking forward to it.

Enabled by the Asia Urbs programme, Auroville is now geared up to look, in depth, at all major aspects of the overall emerging plan for the township, and how they correlate. This includes, naturally, the Auroville Electrical



Working on the Town Hall Annex

Service (AVES), which is deeply involved in the town planning activities and their objective, and needs to prepare a Municipal Energy Plan. For this they will determine the present pattern of energy consumption and prepare a 'municipal energy map', taking into consideration the various categories and locations of users, the identification of weak points in the grid, and possible areas of improvement in energy saving for big users. They will also make recommendations at town planning level on how to improve grid performance and how to promote a more diffused consumption of renewable energy. They may also be able to suggest energy saving techniques that can be included in the design and construction of buildings.

For this to happen, first Auroville's present energy situation needs to be assessed in its entirety. Once this is done, AVES, with the help of external consultants, will prepare a Master Plan for the Future Installation of Low Tension and High Tension Lines which will include a pre-feasibility study for the installation of an electrical sub-station endowed with 4 feeders and 4 different capacity transformers. Again, for Auroville to become a city, it is high time that this is done, and we're appreciative that the Asia Urbs programme is enabling us to go in depth into this crucial next step for the future township.

Solar energy plays an important part in this area as well. With the aim of promoting the use of solar energy systems, the Auroville Solar Service is participating in the project with display and demonstration of solar systems in various public buildings in Auroville and nearby villages, such as schools, mini health centres, libraries and local Panchayat offices.

Then there is another area where we're all concerned, namely water. Water plays an essential role in the development of any urban centre, and specially so in India. In order to avoid that our city should suffer from the ecological effects of over-exploitation of ground water resources in the wider catchment area, an innovative concept to base the city's future water supply entirely on the rainfall within its boundaries has been developed by an internationally renowned German expert and friend of Auroville, Harald Kraft. In order to find out if this concept will be suitable to Auroville's conditions, Harald is now being enabled by the Asia Urbs scheme to do a pre-feasibility study of his proposal, which will provide us with required information and data in the near future.



The 'Auroville's Future' Team

As Auroville's first aquifer will be used for fresh water storage and therefore the groundwater resources for potable water, in future infiltration of wastewater into the ground will be absolutely unacceptable. We therefore need decentralised water treatment plants to bring the treated water up to a suitable quality standard, so that it can be re-used for irrigation and similar purposes.

As Auroville already has quite some experience with several water treatment plants, we will now, under the Asia Urbs programme, prepare a plan for the installation of various decentralised wastewater treatment units. Under this plan we will be identifying the location of these units in order to optimise their efficiency in terms of ratios between the forecast population of the settlement, the capacity of the plant, and the size of the area to irrigate with the recycled water.

Water and environmental monitoring

The Auroville Water Service, which oversees Auroville's Environmental Monitoring Service laboratory, is also participating in the project. Very advanced technical equipment has been ordered so that we can monitor activities in Auroville and the surrounding villages requiring pollution control. Considering the increasing contamination of the area, especially by uncontrolled disposal of garbage, industrial effluents and the hazardous pesticides being sprayed on the surrounding cashew crop plantations, we see this as a matter of first priority.

Once the equipment is up and functioning, the laboratory will have the capacity to analyse 250 samples of water per month, corresponding to 70 per cent of the local water supply; 100 samples per month of milk and



Nursery - Botanical Garden

dairy products, food samples, fruits, vegetables and locally processed and packed food; and 150 soil samples per month for pesticide contamination, chemically hazardous waste, PCB phenols, heavy metals, etc.

As Auroville is already a renowned example of land regeneration and the development of a green environment, and as the town will be covered with more than 50% of green areas, it goes without saying that green work is very much present in our project as well. In collaboration with the teams of Pitchandikulam's Bio Resource Centre and the Auroville Botanical Garden, the project will amply contribute to the creation of city parks, green corridors, green areas, avenues, water catchment ponds, water run-off control and kitchen gardens. The idea is to create a natural integration of the urban landscape and the general water management strategy, linking aspects of utility and beautification. We may end up with a living example of conscious

collaboration between nature and urban settlement.

A Green City Service Nursery, which is being set up in the Botanical Garden, is getting ready to start with the Auroville urban green work. This nursery will gather the personnel and expertise already existing in Auroville, and will also get input from experts from elsewhere in India and abroad.

Training

Training schemes are very much a part of this project. AVES will each year select 12 young local people and train them during the two successive years to become fully-fledged electricians. The training programmes will include both theory and practice. As a matter of fact, the first batch of students is already receiving their training on the premises of AVES, in a specially arranged classroom there. Of course, the boys are very enthusiastic about this opportunity to learn a trade, knowing that it will help them find better jobs in the future. Some of them may even be employed by AVES itself.

The Auroville Solar Service has also been enabled to start a training programme. Theirs offers ten courses of one month each for 10 Aurovilian and local students as well as students sent by organisations from other parts of India. They will be trained in solar equipment installation and maintenance.

Asia Urbs' training activities also include education in green work expertise, where batches of 15 people will be trained in gardening and urban landscaping for 160 days per year for over two years. The training will cover plant sanitation, biological cultivation of green public areas, soil analysis and composition, basic principles of landscaping, water conservation, and more.

For further info e-mail: aurofuture@auroville.org.in



Electrical training class



Solar training class

Enquiries or feedback relating to this newsletter and its contents are always welcome, and can be communicated to:
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