

PUDUCHERRY

Auroville set to mark golden jubilee in February



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City has become a model for settlement planning since its creation on February 28, 1968 to promote international understanding

“Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity...”

It was with this founding vision that Mirra Alfassa, spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo, or simply The Mother to her followers, set about establishing Auroville as a guiding force for an alternative and sustainable way of life and a living experiment in community living, learning and sharing.

Fifty years have rolled by since Auroville was inaugurated on February 28, 1968 when youth representing 121 nations and 23 Indian States placed a handful of earth in a lotus-shaped urn, symbolising the creation of a city dedicated to international understanding and planetary transformation. The Mother's vision has fired the imagination of people from all across the world and today Auroville is home to over 2,500 volunteers from about 50 nations.

Aurovillians have broken new ground in settlement planning offering a model for other cities in India and across the world that experience extreme urbanisation pressures and also demonstrating how urban and rural areas can develop in a holistic fashion. Success stories also abound in areas such as renewable energy, education, healthcare and waste management.

As the golden jubilee (February 28, 2018) of its formation draws near, Auroville has chalked out a series of local, national and international events to celebrate the occasion.

According to a press statement, "Auroville residents and well-wishers worldwide have begun to plan and organise events and activities around the theme of Auroville's raison d'être."

"The occasion presents an unprecedented opportunity to honour the birth and vision of Auroville, to increase the recognition of its relevance for India and the world, to attract people of all ages from India and abroad to visit Auroville and participate in the events and to document and share its journey of 50 years."

National events

During and around the Auroville birthday, a wide range of events has been lined up aiming to bring together local, national and international participants, to foster a renewed sense of connection, both within

Auroville and with the world at large, “as an expression of a collective aspiration for human unity.” Auroville is organising three national events in Delhi, one in UNESCO, one at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and one at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi, around the theme: “Auroville: City for Human Unity.”

An exhibition exploring the globe concept through architecture and sciences, featuring, among others, photos of Matri Mandir by renowned photographer, James Ewing, has been scheduled from November 9 to March 2018 at the Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine (the city of Architecture and Heritage) Paris.

French Minister for Culture Francoise Nyssen is expected to open the event.

From November 22 to 26, an Auroville exhibition and other activities will take place at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts campus in New Delhi.

The exhibition will display information and audiovisuals on the thematic areas of Auroville: The City, the International Zone and Pavilions, Sustainability and Green Practice, Outreach and Education and Organisation. Each booth with posters displaying a full coverage of Auroville’s activities and visions in each of the thematic areas will have several Aurovilians engaged in that field present to explain, engage, stimulate and represent Auroville. The exhibition will be opened on November 22, at 2.30 p.m., and the Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, Karan Singh, will open the conference at 5 p.m.

The aim of this event is to raise awareness on Auroville in the national capital, as well as to facilitate a sharing of knowledge and experience with the rest of India and the world, as well as pave the way for Auroville’s future.

Additionally, on November 22, a panel discussion moderated by Ronald Meinardus will feature Anu Majumdar (from Auroville) Jurgen Axer (from Auroville) Sachidananda Mohanty (Auroville Foundation — member of Governing Board) and Makarand Paranjypte. “Experience Auroville” will offer tastes of Auroville products and foods. It will feature

interactive activities such as “Awareness Through the Body” workshops, WasteLess card game “Pick it UP” and Ecofemme stitching activity. There will also be opportunities for presentations and talks by people living and working in Auroville.

The Awareness Through the Body (ATB) experience will offer a comprehensive curriculum of activities and exercises that aim to raise awareness and enable both children and adults to become conscious of their own perceptions and abilities, so that they may become more self-aware, self-directed individuals.

The wasteless card game “Pick it Up”, based on the “Go Fish” card game, teaches one to separate and recycle waste through the informal sector, while highlighting common waste items which have monetary value. EcoFemme will display washable cloth pads made of cotton and promote well-being through the whole menstrual cycle, as well as being affordable. The take-away message is that using cloth pads can prevent thousands of tonnes of nonbiodegradable sanitary waste around the world each month – it takes 500-800 years to decompose a disposable.

Local products

Auroville food production businesses including ‘Coffee Ideas’, ‘Sciro Pizza’ and ‘Bread & Chocolate’ will provide some much sought-after Auroville products.

On November 24, a panel discussion on the theme of “Learning to Live Together: Translating SDG4.7 into Practice” has been planned at UNESCO building in New Delhi to celebrate 50 years of collaboration between Auroville and UNESCO.