Auroville shows the world spirit of unity: Sibal

Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal releasing the copy of Passage, a magazine at Auroville on Monday.
— PHOTO: T. SINGARAVELOU

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PUDUCHERRY: Lauding the concept of Auroville, Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal said “it is larger than life and it is much more than India is.”

“We all live in an imperfect world and perfection is one we strive to achieve,” he said, adding that Auroville has shown the world the importance of spirit of unity and humaneness. “It symbolises what we ought to have gone across the world,” he said addressing the Aurovillians after launching Passage, an educational magazine.

Touching upon educational scenario in the country, Mr Sibal said “education as we understand over the years was a formal structure for a child to start his career. It has never taught to understand the self.”

However, taking into account the present “imperfect world” dominated by market economy, the country cannot afford to do away with formal education.

The option before the government was to allow the child to choose what he or she could find joy in learning, Mr Sibal said.

Later, in an informal talk with journalists at Auroville, the Union Minister said talks are on with insurance companies to provide health insurance coverage to teachers and group housing coverage. The aim was to attract more number of people to teaching profession, he added.

Union Minister of State for Planning, Parliamentary Affairs and Culture V. Narayanasamy also attended the function.
MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER
8.11.1968

We went, Roger Anger, Prem Malik, Astar Pateli and Alain Bernard to the Prime Minister's residence at 8.30 a.m. in the morning on the 8th November. We were put in the garden of the residence near the entrance and we were hoping to be seen by the P.M. among the first. But when he came in he on that day decided to begin by the other side. While he was going he was intercepted by an old lady who was in the first group to whom he apparently said: "Don't worry, I will come to you soon." Then he went to the other side and started to meet the groups. It went on for about one hour and he had reached about two-thirds of the way to others when he apparently had a remembrance of this old lady and walked straight towards their group. In the process, he happened to look at us and seemed to recognise some of us who had met him previously and then cut across and went to us. He greeted us very sweetly and for a few seconds we were not sure whether it would be our turn immediately. But since he did not move further, we understood that we were to speak to him there and then. Astar said "Thank you for safeguarding Auroville." P.M. smiled and Alain said "We are very happy with the Auroville Foundation Act." "Oh! that" said the P.M. visibly happy over our expression of our gratitude. Then he said "Is everything all right? Is there any problem?" Alain said: "No, we are very happy." P.M.: "Yes, I think we have been able to do something." Then Astar presented Roger. "I am very happy to present to you Roger who is a renowned architect of France. The Mother
has worked with him for 25 years to realize a vision of Auroville. For the last two months he has been working on the Master Plan. Aster said that Roger happened to be here today and we are happy to have the opportunity of meeting you. He is going back to Paris tonight for the next two months and he will be finalising the details of the Master Plan. "He will be back by mid-January and would like to meet you then," she added. For a long time, like 20-30 seconds P.M. looked at Roger straight in the eyes while listening to us there. Roger then started to present a small model of galaxy that we had brought with us. He said: "This town has been waiting for 10 years to become a reality. It has been foreseen for 50,000 inhabitants." P.M. looked at the model and said: "Oh! It looks interesting." Roger explained that the city has been conceived as an experimental town. Roger indicated the site with the gardens at the centre. It is a radio-concentric plan which comprises four zones - cultural, industrial, international and residential - which should be expressed in a great diversity.

Roger then explained about the 'crown' which will create the unity between the four zones. Then Roger said that one of the most important projects that we were contemplating at present is the Centre of International Research in Human Unity (CIRHU).

We opened the album for the P.M. and slowly P.M. looked attentively on each page. P.M. said "Yes, yes". When he looked at the last page where he saw a quotation from Indira Gandhi saying "May Auroville truly become a city of light and peace," he had a sweet smile on his face.
Roger then took the other album of the Master Plan and quickly shuffled through the pages saying that it will be too long to present you details now. He said "When it is fully ready, it would be better that we come to meet you again and present it." P.M. said: "Yes, yes, certainly." Alain said: "So far we have always talked to you about problems. Today we are happy to show you something positive. P.M. smiled and nodded and said: "I will do what I can to help." (We had the impression that he meant particularly about the CIRIU).

After hearing this comment of the P.M., Prem Malik immediately said: "Well, here are two letters for you. The first one precisely states the help that we expect from you and we hope that you will send our request to the Planning Commission with your recommendation. P.M. scanned quickly the first page and then cast a quick glance at the estimates on next page particularly the grand total and then said: "We will do that." Prem Malik said further: "In the second letter we have suggested certain names for the Governing Body of the Foundation which are of eminent people who can guide us because it is very important to Auroville and to the success of this Act. We have also suggested names for the International Advisory Council wherein we have included the three names of the present members because they have helped Auroville a lot and we have suggested two additional names. P.M. took the two letters and kept them in his hand. Then Alain presented the two books that have been published by the Institute, "The Aim of Life" and "The
value-education, particularly, for teachers. In these books "The Aim of Life" we are presenting many different aims of life with lofty ideals. What we are trying to show particularly to teachers is that to think of aim of life is important, but it is for you to choose for yourself among so many lofty ideas. In the second book "Good Teacher and Good Pupil" (When the P.M. saw the cover of the second book, he seemed to like it), we are presenting so many ways to be a good teacher and so many ways to be a good pupil - from ancient India to modern times. We think it can offer ideas and insights about teaching. Well, we have done these two books and we hope that they can be of service." P.M. smiled and he gave the books and letters to his Secretary and said in Hindi: "Inko andaar bhaij deejeye" (Please send these in), pointing towards his office.

We said again, "Thank you so much." As the P.M. was leaving, he gave Roger a long look again in the eyes and said: "I wish you the best of luck with this Centre. I will do what I can to help."