

INDIAN MISSION TO EUROPEAN CITIES

(5th to 12th October, 2011)

The concept of visiting different European Cities which showcase their best urban practices was deeply appreciated by Indian delegates.

Beginning with Geneva on 5th October, delegates enjoyed the discussion during the lunch hosted Mr. Bruno Schmid, CEO of SB Technique. The visit to the old Town provided a good example of how heritage can be preserved and how such preservation can attract tourists, thereby becoming a revenue generating instrument for the City. The day ended up with a warm and magnificent reception at the Townhall presided over by Councilor Sami Kanaan.

On 6th October, the delegates found the visit to the *Services Industriels de Genève* very interesting especially with reference to solid waste treatment with co-generation and effluent recycling. Lectures in the SIG Auditorium on photovoltaic research by the faculty of the *Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne* also elicited useful interaction. Delegates missed the opportunity to visit *Du Pont de Nemours Science & Technology Centre*.

The wonderful welcome dinner at Bastille Hill by Jean-Michel Detroyat, Deputy Mayor of Grenoble, on 6th October was enjoyed by the delegates. The presentation on various urban planning projects on 7th October along with the visit to the '*Caserne de Bonne*' neighbourhood elicited enthusiastic responses from the delegates. In particular, an energy positive office block was a treat. Restricting the Minatec visit to just the showroom without adequate explanation by trained staff was the point of some criticism. The visit to *Schneider Electric* and explanation of their system of energy management was liked by the delegates. The visit to urban restructuring and rehabilitation through the social housing project of ACTIS was also liked by delegates.

On 8th October, excellent presentations by the EGIS Group in Paris witnessed animated discussion. Delegates wished that these could have been followed by a couple of field visits. The lack of a field visit to a Veolia site was also missed.

On 10th October, the visit to the '*Tours & Taxis*' Project in Brussels bore testimony to several questions by delegates and a fine discussion. The "*Dubrucq*" and "*Espoir*" Projects were also liked by the delegates. On the whole, Brussels field visits were a great success !

In the afternoon of 10th October, delegates appreciated the arrangement to witness the inaugural session of "*Open Days*" in Brussels at the kind invitation of the *Committee of Regions of the European Union*.

On 11th October, Delegates found the visit to the *Phillips Lighting Centre* and the *Christian Huygens College* extremely interesting. The visit to "*Strijp R*" elicited less exciting response since the staff couldn't fully explain the technical nuances of the Project.



The *Euro*India Centre

The 12th October saw a very excited group of Indian delegates led by Honourable Mr. Kamal Nath, India's Minister for Urban Development, attend the plenary of the *Committee of the Regions of the EU*. The warm welcome accorded by Ms. Mercedes Bresso, President of CoR and Mr. Kamal Nath's address on: "*India's Infrastructure & Urbanisation Challenges*", followed by an animated discussion was deeply appreciated by Indian delegates.

The subsequent sampling of workshops at "*Open Days*" left something to be desired. The meeting with *Business Europe* with Minister Kamal Nath's address and thereafter the warm welcome by the Mayor & Deputy Mayor of Leuven, Mr. Louis Tobback and Mohammed Ridouani, organised at the beautiful heritage building of the Townhall, found the delegates in high spirits.

Indian delegates generally found field visits very stimulating. Greater availability of technical experts and elucidation of subtleties of practices is an area for further improvement. To sum up, the Mission of Indian delegates to European Cities for observing best urban practices was a resounding success.

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