# AIAT Newsletter
## Winter 2022

### About Auroville Institute of Applied Technology/AIAT

- AIAT was founded in 2004 with the financial aid of the German Govt. and many private donors in Germany to empower rural youth with skills for earning a livelihood with dignity. It is a non-profit unit of Auroville Foundation (see more under aiat.in).
- AIAT is situated in one of the most backward areas of Tamil Nadu and is serving youth from the bottom of the social and economic pyramid. 95% of our trainees depend on the availability of a stipend (BPL and 40% schedule caste).
- AIAT is holistic in its pedagogic approach and addresses issues of the stakeholders (trainees and companies).
- Since 2022 AIAT is a college in Applied Sciences affiliated with Pondicherry University for Bachelor in Vocation degree courses/B.Voc of 3 years duration in Green Energy & Electric Systems, Software Development & Machine Learning, Production Technology and Applied Electronics and Chip Design.
- AIAT also offers Central Govt. recognized 1-2 years industrial training under the dual system of training in collaboration with 10 companies of the region.
- Till date, approx. 2900 trainees have been trained in Electronic Mechanics, Draughtsman Civil, Information Technology, Mechanical Engineering, Secretarial ship, and Accounting.

## Dear Friends and Well-wishers of
## Auroville Institute of Applied Technology/AIAT

## Welcome to our Winter Newsletter 2022

In this edition we bring you news and pictures from our AIAT-world. We propose to you as before "Make yourself a cup of tea, relax, and enjoy reading! For us it is like an adventure novel."

Yes, it's winter monsoon season here. This time the rains were very moderate. It has rained mostly at night and the lakes and water tanks are almost full. It is green, blooming, and fragrant. Wonderful!
Besides: Corona seems to be over!

Some of you will know that not only structural changes are underway in Auroville.
We think, hope, and do our little bit to change things for the better. But above all, we are concentrating our energies on our project and continue to practice Karma Yoga.

Read *the facts* about AIAT for yourself:

## 1. The vision manifests itself as "AIAT becomes a college of applied sciences"

*Yes, AIAT is now a college of applied sciences!*

The status: In September, AIAT received the preliminary notification of recognition from the University of Pondicherry. 'Preliminary' because many conditions still must be fulfilled for full approval (teachers, classrooms, library…). 'Preliminary' also because we must have a few years of teaching behind us before we are given final recognition. Four B.Voc courses of 3 years duration are now affiliated with Pondicherry University. But we begin with two B.Voc courses because of lack of intake.

These courses are in Green Energy & Electric System and Software Development & Machine Learning. The other two courses one in Applied Electronics & Chip Design (ECE) and Production Technology (MECH) will have to wait till next year.

Due to late affiliation and other bureaucratic hurdles, the counselling procedure for the admission of students could only start at the end of November. The counselling of the admission process is like a "merry-go-round" and will continue until December 12. Currently, 7 students have enrolled. In this country, the students select a university/college according to its reputation and scholarship opportunities. Since we are beginners without a history and reputation as a college, we will start in any case and rely on quality to build up a good reputation over the coming years.

## 2. A chronology of transition

From the first initiative of the Pondicherry Engineering College seeking collaboration with AIAT in the field of higher education under the vocational stream leading to a B.Voc/Bachelor of Vocation degree till the preliminary approval on 14th September 22, 18 months – one could say 'up and down' – have passed. Here are the important steps of our timeline:

- 2019: The Tamil Nadu government is opening a government vocational school nearby, offering free education plus a stipend, laptop, bus fare, books, and uniforms. AIAT admitted 102 students (highest ever) in Industrial training courses.
- Due to Corona, the admission dropped to 45 because students preferred Govt. Industrial Training Institute as it was free.
- 5/2020: Prof. Kothandanraman, Principal of Pondicherry Engineering College, visits AIAT to explore the possibility of B.Voc courses to be held at our Institute but to be affiliated with the future Pondicherry Technology University.
- All the 'Heads of the Departments' of Pondicherry Engineering College visited AIAT and found that AIAT could offer B.Voc courses, provided that the current infrastructure is upgraded for a three year course and the needed MoU to be signed by Auroville Foundation.
- 3/2021: Prof. Kothandanraman retires. There is no successor to take this issue forward.
- 2021: The new T.N. government is calling on all school headmasters in the country to work towards ensuring that as many students as possible complete Grade 12. Thereafter, these students were to be guided to favour a bachelor's degree in vocational education and training rather than practical training ('White collar job'; A bachelor's degree is needed for most of the popular government jobs).
  The new admission of Industrial Training courses came down to just 35.
- Since the number of Industrial Training courses was reducing, we decided to look for an alternative and on August 21st approached the Vice Chancellor of Pondicherry University to explore any possibility of AIAT getting affiliation with the planned B.Voc courses.
- Pondicherry university showed interest, not only for this project, but was looking for a broader cooperation with Auroville.
- 7/1/2022: Auroville Foundation and Pondicherry University signed the Memorandum of Understanding/MoU.
  Auroville foundation has the plan to establish a university in Auroville. Thus, Auroville Institute of Applied Technology with undergraduate courses in 'Emerging' technologies made the first step in this journey.
  Dr. Jayanti Ravi, IAS Secretary, Auroville Foundation, wrote on 16.8.22 to the VC of Pondicherry University, "Auroville Foundation aspires to build a unique

Institute of applied sciences delivering high-quality education and providing solutions to the future challenges."

- June 2022: Jean Yves Tariot starts as a volunteer with AIAT. He takes over the marketing activities incl. the new webpage of AIAT.
- 14/9/2022: AIAT received the Provisional Affiliation order from Pondicherry University to start bachelor courses this year and to adapt the infrastructure to the requirements in the coming years.
- The AIAT campus in Aurobrindavan will be the site for the Auroville Institute of Applied Technology whereas the Irumbai campus will become a centre for community innovation and start-ups.
- Planning for infrastructure, financing of investments and ongoing operating costs will be carried out and presented to the relevant committees in Auroville.
- The Governing Board of Auroville supports the university project. However, the budget needed to build the infrastructure has not yet been approved.
- Auroville Town Development Council /ATDC allotted 5 acres of land to the AIAT College in Aurobrindavan.
- Curricula are being developed for the following B.Voc courses and approved by the Board of Studies at the University by the end of October 2022:
  - Green Energy & Electric System
  - Software Development & Machine Learning
  - Production Technology
  - Applied Electronics & Chip Design
  
  In designing the curricula for the Bachelor courses, Auroville's know-how in renewable Energy, Software Development, Cyclic economy, Applied Electronics and Chip Design and manufacturing is incorporated and thus made this knowledge available to a wider circle of people through teaching.
- Teaching and workshop staff hired.
- Jean Yves' team visited the Govt. Senior Secondary Schools in the area to introduce Grade 12 students to the new educational opportunities at AIAT/College and to educate them about B.Voc.
- November 22: AIAT is listed on the Pondicherry university portal 'CENTAC', a single window for admission in all colleges of Pondicherry.
- Student counselling took place on 28.11. Only a few interested people came for counselling as most of the students had already decided on a university/college. Another handicap AIAT suffered, was that the B.Voc courses were new to CENTAC, and thus were not included in a financial aid scheme under it.
- There are indications of a possible collaboration with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. See point 4.2.
- The internship is a part of the syllabus, thus a link to the local industry is essential. Jean Yves is negotiating with our partner companies and the Chamber of Industry/CII in Pondicherry. See point 4.3.

- Auroville Foundation has applied to AIM/Atal Innovation Mission for a Community Innovation Centre in Auroville based at the AIAT campus in Irumbai. This would give AIAT the direct opportunity to mentor and support budding startups to innovate and commercialize. We expect a decision from the relevant bodies by spring 2023.
- AIAT is looking for partner universities and companies in the field of emerging technologies (teacher and student exchange programs, projects, and internships in industrial companies). Your support is welcome.



MoU/Memorandum of Understanding 7/1/2022
Prof. Gurmeet Singh, Vice Chancellor der Universität Pondicherry
and Dr. Jayanti Ravi, Secretary of Auroville Foundation

## 3. Preserving what was once tried and tested in the face of adversity

This year we wanted to phase out Industrial Training/ITI courses but got 'cold feet'. The process of affiliation was tedious and took more time than anticipated. It was also full of uncertainties and its impact on current teachers and our finances was unfavorable. In August, we decided to continue with Industrial training courses at the Irumbai campus, in Electronic Mechanic and Information Technology and phase out the courses in Fitter and Welding which were conducted at the Aurobrindavan campus. For these two courses, we could admit only 27 students, thus in 2022 AIAT has only 57 students in the Industrial Training courses. (For comparison: 2019: 180 trainees in 5 subject areas; 2020: 113 trainees in 5 subject areas; 2021: 70 trainees in 4 subject areas). Whether the glass is half full or half empty in these post-Corona times…, it's not enough to survive. We have been forced to lay off three teachers from the old team.

# 4. Gratifying survival strategies

## 4.1 Dominik Hohla – our new volunteer from Austria

As they say, "He is a blessing for AIAT". We are very grateful for Dominik's helpful and profound commitment. Here are his own words:

"Best wishes from Auroville. As a civil servant abroad from Austria, I am allowed to work at AIAT this year in the field of mechanical engineering. In the course of the school's reorientation towards a college with a bachelor's degree, many things have to be repaired in the workshop. My task is therefore to make the machines, which have unfortunately not been used much in the past years, especially in Corona, fully operational again. In addition to repairs, this includes the purchase of new material and tools, as well as a comprehensive restructuring of the warehouse.

In addition, I offer courses at AIAT in 3D product design and production engineering. The aim of these courses is to strengthen the local interest in mechanical engineering and to put more focus on practical work in the higher education of the youth from Auroville. In all my activities, I can draw on the knowledge I acquired during my HTL education in Austria and put it into practice. I benefit enormously from this, as it allows me to deepen my skills. It is a well-known fact that you learn best when you explain!" Dominik Hohla

## 4.2 There are indications of a possible collaboration with the Shri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry

Initial discussions are taking place with interested people in higher education at Shri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry about cooperation with AIAT in the field of Bachelor courses/B.Voc. (The Ashram provides informal technical education equivalent to bachelor's degree for the adolescent of Ashramites).

## 4.3 We are exploring possible cooperation with the Chamber of Industry/CII and the company Manatec

The company Manatec (manufacturer of automotive wheel balancers and platforms) visited AIAT and explored the possibility of upgrading their staff training with an ITI certificate to a diploma or bachelor's degree certificate.

The AIAT management then visited the Managing Director of Manatec and the Chairman of the Chamber of Industry/CII and offered a training course at AIAT/College leading to a diploma within one year.

## 5. Two new, younger, experienced members of management have joined

### Dr. Sanjeev Ranganathan is appointed Principal AIAT/College.

Sanjeev is an Aurovilian and has acquired the education required for a Principal/College at Elite IIT/Madras and Ph.D at Columbia University/US. He has over 18 years of experience in industry and 10 years in Education.

He is the owner of a chip design company here in the area and runs the Isai Ambalam School in Auroville.

Sanjeev is a good choice for the position at AIAT/College. He favours the practical orientation, including cooperation with companies in training, just as we know it from AIAT. He also has a strong interest in taking students beyond just theoretical knowledge. Here are a few words from him:

*"The learning programs will be hands-on project-centered with the faculty working hand in hand with industry practitioners in both design and delivery of the program.*

*The program moves away from the outdated theoretical syllabus and focuses on what you need to learn to be capable of doing something in each stream you choose. Next it builds the five minds of the future that you require to synthesize to make information, knowledge, and knowledge wisdom."*

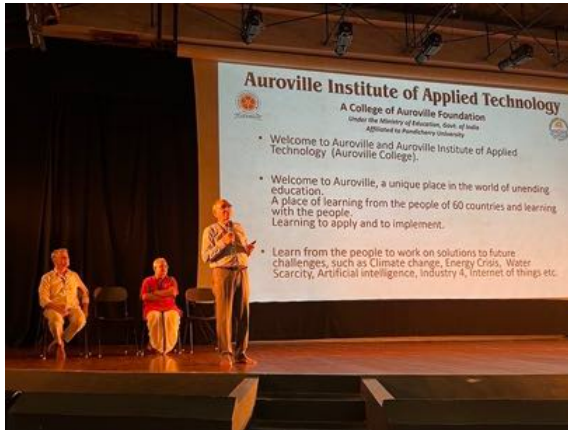### Jean Yves Tariot will become Head of AIAT and is appointed Executive

Jean Yves has an M.Eng in Aeronautical Sciences from Toulouse-France. He has worked 15 years in the industry in the technical field as well as in the international business development dept. He finally created his own company with his wife and ran their business for 17 years. As an entrepreneur, he has had a comprehensive experience in product design, patenting, production, marketing, and sales. He joined Auroville in 2019 and he is now Aurovilian. He joined AIAT a few months ago and is enthusiastic about the B.Voc scheme being put in place by the College as it focuses on skill and on-the-job experience. He underlined:

*"In our time and our world where access to knowledge is theoretically easy by the Internet and where many young people live more and more in a virtual world, it becomes essential to focus on experience, skill, know-how, in short, to have the two feet anchored in reality.*

*Education is responsible for developing the curiosity and autonomy of students to discover and solve global problems without providing them with ready-made answers or solutions."*

He is actively willing to take responsibility and has interest in the development of AIAT to become an institute of Research and Development and an innovation Centre for future business. AIAT would thus build a foundation of the knowledge economy in Auroville.

Many of you will now be asking, "and Lavkamad Chandra?"

Yes, Lavkamad now has well-suited successors and is gradually fading into the background. He has given his all once again in this current, long, nerve-wracking transition period: his ability to think big, wide, and positive, his perseverance, patience, and his talent for making things happen; In doing so, he has endured and tuned multiple polarities in order not to have to close AIAT, but to give it a new, greater purpose. When he was 65, he retired and has been working for AIAT ever since. Without his tireless commitment to the welfare of young people in this country, AIAT would not exist. Next year he will celebrate his 84th birthday.

## 6. Who's going to pay for it?

To fully build the required infrastructure for the college, we are seeking help from the Indian government as well as Indian and German companies. Everything else we must do ourselves over the next three or four years. That is hard enough:

- The ongoing operating costs are rising.
  - In this country, too, energy prices have risen by 60% and the inflation rate is 7%.
  - Higher staff costs for a team qualified for B.Voc.
  - High operating resources and material costs.
- Funding for the most important measures such as:
  - Modernization of the Computer Lab
    (The 7–14-year-old PCs need to be replaced).
  - Broken chairs need to be replaced.
  - A temporary library is required,
  - as well as an office for the principal.
  - We also need a puddle-free access to the campus.

## 7. Call for donations

*To those of you who have supported us so generously so far, we extend our heartfelt gratitude.* This has also been a motivation for Lavkamad to continue and not give up. Now a way has been paved: the 'best case' scenario has happened, AIAT/College has a bright future as an Institute of higher Education, Research & Development for Auroville and the region. Of course, we need money for this. Perhaps you can help and might also stand by us for this 'Herculean act'?

## How to donate?

a) a sum to cover the current operating costs
b) scholarship (Indian Rupees 4000/month, Rs 48000/year
   or $ 50/month, $ 600/year,
   of course, half scholarships can also be donated)

Pl. consider that 97% of it benefits young people directly.
Only 3% is used for administration costs.

Your donations are tax deductible as per your country's rules.
We ourselves in the management team work on an honorary basis.

Important Pl. mention always in your remittance to AIAT:
'AIAT Scholarship' or 'Donation for AIAT' so that your money reaches us.

Important to specify:
Your name and address on the transfer, so that we can send the donation receipt.
Pl. inform us via e-mail so that we can follow your remittance and make sure that you get a donation receipt; principal.aiat@auroville.org.in

## How to remit your donation to AIAT?

### 1) For foreign donors
   The best way to remit your donation to AIAT is through your local
   Auroville International (AVI) organization
   http://auroville-international.org/avi_centres/
   They can take your donation, issue a tax receipt,
   and channel the funds to Auroville.
   You can find a list of AVI Centers here.
   Important: Pl. mention that the donation is meant for AIAT in Auroville, India.

### 2) Donate through donation portal: Auroville Donation Gateway

Important is to mention that the donation is for AIAT in Auroville, India.

### 3) For Indian donors

IFSC Code:       SBI0003160

MICR Code:       605002007

A/C with:           State Bank of India, Auroville International Township
                    Branch: Kuilapayalam, Auroville 605101 T.N.
A/C Holder:         Auroville Unity Fund Main
A/C Number:         31612623238
Purpose:            Auroville Institute of Applied Technology (please specify)

Pl. inform us about your donation via e-mail: principal.aiat@auroville.org.in.
AIAT would take care that you get a receipt from the unity fund enabling
for 100% Tax deduction.


*Merry Christmas and*

*a happy and peaceful year 2023*


*AIAT Management Team*