



Photographs by D. RAVINDER REDDY

GREEN MAKES

BUSINESS SENSE

By A. VENKATA NARAYANA

A showcase for environmentally sound practices, the CII-Sohrabji Green Business Centre in Hyderabad earned a rare platinum rating by the U.S. Green Building Council even before its official opening.

The partners for the CII-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre (GBC) in Hyderabad were jubilant in November 2003 when the news came that the center had been awarded the coveted platinum rating by the U.S. Green Building Council under its Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) program. GBC is the only building outside the United States, and the third in the world, which earned this rare distinction.

Even though the center was initially conceived during President Bill Clinton's visit to India in March 2000, the construction began in August 2002 because of delays in acquiring a two-hectare plot of land from the Andhra Pradesh govern-

ment and getting plans approved by the U.S. Green Building Council. The construction of GBC's 2,000-square-meter area was completed in November, with its formal inauguration set for spring 2004. The center is a result of unique synergy and leadership displayed by participating private sector companies and government agencies: the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the industrial house of Godrej, the government of Andhra Pradesh and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The idea for setting up GBC in Hyderabad was first proposed in 2000 by Srinivasan Padmanabhan, a senior energy and environmental adviser to USAID in New Delhi who exchanged ideas about green architecture with

CII and the Andhra Pradesh government. To materialize the concept, Padmanabhan invited John Armstrong, an energy expert and consultant with PA Inc. of the U.S., to India in 2000. In consultation with CII, Armstrong worked out a comprehensive business plan for CII and advised them to send a group of Indian experts in energy and environment, along with an architect, on a “design tour” to the United States. The group learned about new “green architecture” design concepts and how to adapt them to Indian conditions during their visit to several cities.

Seminars and conferences organized by USAID and CII on the green building concept helped catch the attention of the corporate sector, paving the way for development of this novel business environment, the Green Business Centre. Resources were made available. Jamshyd N. Godrej, managing director of Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited, generously donated Rs. 50 million toward GBC’s total construction cost of Rs. 80 million. Several CII members supported this venture, which they feel will offer long-term returns both to the industry and the country. In addition, USAID granted \$1.2 million funds for conducting green-related activities in India over a period of three years. Karan Grover, an internationally acclaimed and LEED-accredited architect, offered his professional services to GBC. This enthusiastic support from all quarters ensured that the project took off and was completed in record time.

To get the platinum rating, GBC met the stringent standards laid down by LEED. The center had to be innovative in implementing LEED’s 69 criteria, which include site protection, landscaping and water management, use of eco-friendly building material, improving the indoor and outdoor environment and maintaining constant temperature in the air conditioning unit at 26 degrees Celsius throughout the year. Meeting the LEED’s criteria for the platinum rating is a daunting task, but from the outset all project experts were optimistic and committed to implementation.

The green business building concept emerged in the U.S. only a decade ago. The LEED guidelines were formulated as re-

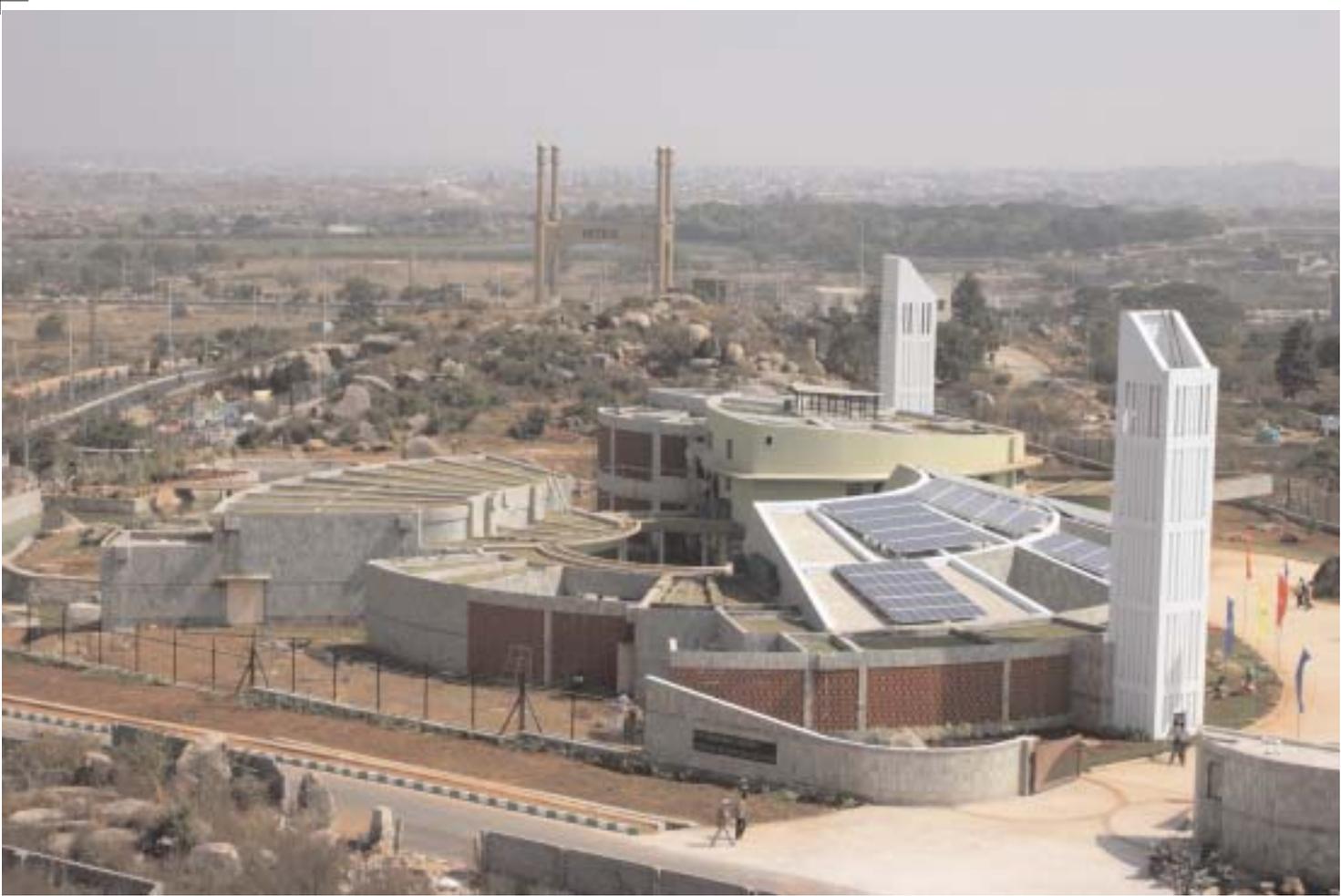


Above: An interior view of the Green Business Centre. Left: Project coordinator Air Commodore (Retd) S.C. Kumar (in white shirt), explains new design features of GBC to Texas Senator John Cornyn and his assistant Matt Winslow. The person looking away is Air Marshal Osman. Right: An aerial view of GBC, located at the High-Tech City in Hyderabad.

cently as 2000. So the movement is still in its infancy. In the U.S., where the movement began, only two buildings have been given platinum rating and more than 200 have been certified with gold, silver and bronze ratings. This ground reality did not discourage the experts working on GBC project who were aiming for a platinum rating. “The long-term objective of the center was to establish itself as a self-sustaining unit. Therefore, we have incorporated many features to the project that helped us earn many points from LEED and finally the platinum rating,” says Air Commodore (Retd.) S.C.

Kumar, project coordinator of GBC.

The GBC aims to foster excellence in energy efficiency, environment and recycling, renewable energy and water management, all issues faced by Indian industry. Water management reduces wastage of water, a principle incorporated into the GBC, which is designed to be self-sufficient. A water body created within the complex will prevent the outflow of both rain and wastage water. “The water collected will be recycled after due process for non-potable purposes. This is one way of protecting the fast-depleting water table. This will also help re-



duce further strain on municipal bodies, the principal suppliers of water,” says Kumar. “So there will be no use of municipal water for non-potable purposes. Only a few kiloliters of water are drawn for drinking purposes,” adds Kumar. Through proper water management and harvesting GBC expects to meet its own requirements.

The “green” architecture of the center saves 10 percent on consumption of conventional energy in the lighting and air conditioning system. Installation of photovoltaic equipment in the complex further saves energy by up to 20 percent. A non-toxic, non-chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) air conditioning unit has been installed to meet the LEED criteria.

Building materials used in GBC are eco-friendly. For example, the cement used contains a high percentage of fly ash, an inexpensive byproduct of the thermal power stations, resulting in savings. More than 25 percent of the materials used are recycled—wood, steel and glass—which are not readily available, but architect Grover and project coordinator Kumar combed the markets until they found what they wanted.

After receiving the platinum rating, GBC plans to reach out to 2,500 business

houses and build the brand in the corporate sector. It plans to promote five more such green building ventures in India by 2005. The GBC will lend its experience and expertise in setting up these energy-efficient units, with the goal of making India a global leader in renewable energy. The center is planning to market green products and establish incubation services for entrepreneurs to develop green products and technologies commercially. The green parks service GBC plans to develop has already found a promoter—the Andhra Pradesh government has donated more than 400 hectares of land for the purpose.

Once GBC becomes fully operational, it will be a platform for demonstrating green products and technologies. It will also be a networking center for entrepreneurs and businesses going green. The information cell plans to bring out a green business directory posting the new worldwide trends and practices. Experts like Kath Williams, vice chairperson of U.S. Green Building Council, have offered support for training and indigenization of LEED rating system.

One of the important components of the GBC is a permanent technology center, which will showcase the available technol-

ogy in green-related activities such as product display. The GBC will host workshops and seminars on new, eco-friendly concepts and technologies for business being developed at home and abroad.

Green business practices have sound economic value. “You will accrue savings in energy and water and, in turn, larger savings will accrue to the society at large. Within three to four years the additional expenses could be recovered from savings made on conservation of water and electricity,” says Padmanabhan, who points out that the initial cost outlay for construction for green buildings is no more than 10 percent of the cost of conventional buildings.

Increased awareness and outreach have drawn new clients to the concept of environmentally friendly business. The North Delhi Power Company Ltd. of the Tata group, the proposed ITC headquarters in Gurgaon and the Reddy Laboratories in Hyderabad have shown interest in constructing green business centers. And more Indians are becoming experts in this field. Proponents are positive, and predict the momentum will increase and the green business movement could eventually replace the old, damaging practices for good. □