

# Futura Condensed

Delhi's school children are racking their brains to develop a masterplan to negotiate the traffic that would arrive with the Commonwealth Games in 2010, says Manoj Nair

**I**F some of Delhi's schoolchildren have their way then the government's Commonwealth Games' woes would disappear lock, stock and barrel. For they are on the verge of coming up with some of the most innovative ideas and models for transportation connecting the Games areas across the river Yamuna to the rest of the city.

They are competing with each other to bring out the optimum solution for the 2010 games. As participants of the Future Cities India 2020 competition being organised by the ministry of science and technology and Bentley Systems, a leading provider of software for the lifecycle of the world's infrastructure, they are 32 in number (eight teams of four students each).

Since most of the competition areas are near the Yamuna river, between the Nizamuddin bridge and Vikas Marg, the competition requires that a roadway be constructed between Lakshmi Nagar railway station and the Noida Turning rail station. The route integrates with the Delhi Metro route while passing the Akshar Dham temple and three competition venues and two housing structures. The roadway must also provide access to four parking structures to be used by the visitors.

Sounds daunting? Not at all. The students are not at the mercy of unbridled imagination. They are being guided to this by mentors who could be experts from the field or institutions like the School of Planning and Architecture.

Says Kapil Sibal, minister for science & technology and Ocean development: "India has earned a reputation for developing a highly-skilled workforce to support its technical outsourcing industry. It is now time for us to direct our many talents in-

wards, and address projects at home that will help secure India's future."

The ministry has plans to convert the competition in a national one. For now it is just Delhi and the Commonwealth Games!

The Future Cities Competition is a very competitive and highly popular contest in the US and has been encouraging students to come up with the most outrageous ideas, like people moving around using giant bubbles or spherical vehicles called Magnepods powered by magnetically charged devices. And their world would tap nuclear fusion for energy and use holograms for communications. Almost as if the world shown in Jetsons is recreated.

Supported by Bentley since 2001, the annual Future City Competition challenges enterprising seventh- and eighth-grade students to create futuristic cities, first as virtual computer models and then as physical models. Judges evaluate each city's liveability, creativity, and efficiency.

Says CEO Greg Bentley: "Future City inspires young people by letting them experience the important work engineers do to create a better world. It's personally and professionally rewarding to see the drive and imagination these students apply to their projects. As an investment in students, we're increasing our support and taking a leading role to help this programme energise even more young people."

Bentley is providing the software assistance for the programme. The very software that has helped most of the big stadiums in the world. "We are also using our software to build the stadiums for the Beijing Olympics," says Bhupinder Singh, MD,

Bentley Systems. The software includes MicroStation as the base CAD system Bentley MX as the Road Design System and Bentley Navigator as the real time simulator. This provides a consistent user interface to integrate key activities for 3D road/building design, modeling, and design visualisation. The application is based on an Integrated Project Model concept where an intelligent 3D road and building model is the single source for all data and design modeling. Design revisions, model updates and data extractions are all made using the same model.

Wouldn't it actually intimidate the students in India who are still caught somewhere on the bridge over the digital divide? "No says," Singh. Our mentors would walk them through the process. Besides, children in Delhi are much ahead of their times. More than we think they are. It is not just that. The thrills of the challenge would also give the impetus to the students to learn things faster. His words are being proved true at Apeejay School, Sheikh Sarai. Says programme councillor of the school's team, Karuni: "They are hands on. Two of them also have proficiency in AutoCad which is a similar programme. Besides, the programme is divided into four parts: vision

writing, design, model making and presentation. Each requires a different kind of skill." According to her, the kids are busy collecting data like what has been done in other parts of the world. They are also jotting notes about shoulders, carriageways, social implications facilities for the physically challenged.

Says Dr R SivaKumar of the DST: "This programme would open a new world to students. It is about games, competition, knowledge and social responsibility. Our knowledge about maps is very little. When do children use a map, for that matter when do we look up maps in a city for directions. We always seek human help. This programme will also help children ideate about things like topographical map." The DST is also running a similar programme in Almorara where students are mapping their neighbourhood.

Much better than engaging in Warcraft, PSPs and Xbox 360. Says Mr Sibal: "The Future Cities 2020 programme will engage some of India's finest young minds in designing world-class infrastructure for economic growth and improved quality of life in our cities."

The best design would be judged in January by a jury of architects, experts, town planners and celebrities. Till then these students would spend exactly 100 hours culled from their leisure time, zero periods, library hours and after school time. Game on, did someone say?

