

## 2<sup>nd</sup> India visit by a delegation of the University of Würzburg

at partner institutions of the DAAD initiative

„A New Passage to India“

28.11. – 06.12.2011

### Delegation:

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kreft, Biocenter & CMI Würzburg, Germany

Dr. Stephan Schröder-Köhne, University of Würzburg Graduate Schools (UWGS)

(also members of the 2010 delegation)

*Please click on the words underlined and highlighted in [blue](#) to go to the respective website*

### Aims:

The first delegation visit in fall 2010 ([report](#) here) had as main objectives

- to promote the new Indo-German activities of the UoW, i.e. the “Würzburg Centre for Modern India – [CMI Würzburg](#)” and the “A [New Passage](#) to India” programme
- to discuss the organizational and infrastructural conditions for the exchange of students and faculty
- to broadly introduce the University of Würzburg (UoW) to our new partner universities JNU New Delhi and University of Hyderabad, with whom a “Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)” has been established in early 2010 and to meet representatives of partner universities with whom MoUs have been signed before 2010, i.e. Kannada University at Hampi and Mangalore University
- to explore possibilities to reinforce existing and to establish new research collaborations
- to establish contacts to the representatives of German organizations in India, e.g. DAAD, DFG, embassy

The aims of this 2<sup>nd</sup> visit were i) a follow-up of the actions mentioned above, ii) introduction to the new Vice Chancellors recently appointed at the JNU and UoH, iii) the extension of all activities to further institutions of higher education and research, in particular in Karnataka (partner state of Bavaria), iv) preparations for the planned bilateral workshops.

In preparation of this visit, a university-wide survey at UoW was conducted, in order to identify existing, planned or desired contacts/collaborations with Indian institutions, faculty and researchers. The results of this survey were taken into account for the planning of the travel schedule and appointments.

### Monday, 28.11.2011

#### New Delhi

Arrival in New Delhi, **Jawaharlal Nehru University** ([JNU](#)). In the afternoon the documents for the next batch of scholarship holders from UoW were handed over to Dr. S. Chandrasekaran, Coordinator (evaluation), and Mr. D. Tekchandani, Advisor (Admissions). Administrative matters of affiliation of students from Würzburg were discussed. In the evening, we had a meeting with Prof. J. Nair, Centre for Historical Studies, DAAD-“A New Passage to India” guest professor at UoW in 2011.

**Tuesday, 29.11.2011**

**Continuation JNU**

Meeting with Prof. Rekha V. Rajan, Centre of German Studies. We discussed practical aspects (mentoring etc.) regarding the next batch of UoW students and future perspectives. In the afternoon there was a meeting with the new Vice-Chancellor (VC) of JNU, Prof. S.K. Sopory, and a number of faculty, among them Prof. Harjit Singh (Chief Advisor International Collaboration), Prof. Z. Hasan (Dean Social Sciences), Prof. N. B. Sarin (Dean Life sciences), Prof. K.J. Mukherjee (Dean Biotechnology). Profs. J. Nair & V. Rodrigues, both former guest professors at UoW, also attended the meeting.



VC Prof. S.K. Sopory, Prof. Kreft, Dr. Schröder-Köhne



The VC welcomed our delegation and emphasized the importance of the cooperation between JNU and UoW. We then explained the intention of the cooperation and of our visit. This was followed by a lively and constructive discussion. It became clear that the mobility programme should be expanded and that new research collaborations are of mutual interest, in addition to the existing ones. In the evening we met again with Prof. Rodrigues, on this occasion we also explored a possible cooperation with Prof. G.N. Jha (Sanskrit Studies) on computer linguistics.

**Wednesday, 30.11.2011**

**New Delhi**

**German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**

At the New Delhi office of [DAAD](#) we met Mr. A. Mahendru (Director of Marketing) and Mrs. P. Midha (Coordinator of "A New Passage to India"). We got detailed information about the progress and success of the "New Passage" programme and about current DAAD schemes and activities.

**German Embassy & German Research Foundation (DFG)**

At the [German Embassy](#) we met the Counselor for Science & Technology, Dr. Christian Aulbach, and the Director of the [DFG Office](#) in New Delhi, Dr. Torsten Fischer. Also present was Prof. U.S. Bava (Director JNU Centre for European Studies), recent awardee of the German Order of Merit ("Bundesverdienstkreuz") and future guest professor at UoW. We briefed them about our activities since our last year's visit and the intentions of the current travel and got very useful information about the future directions of funding as well as best-practice hints for the cooperation activities of UoW.



Prof. U.S. Bava (JNU)

**Thursday, 01.12.2011**  
**Hyderabad**

At the **University of Hyderabad (UoH)** we again visited the associated **Institute of Life Sciences (ILS)** where we had a detailed discussion with Prof. P. Arya (Leader Chemical Biology & Dean Academic Affairs), Dr. A. Shanmugam (Head Corporate Planning) and Dr. K. Parsa (Senior Scientist). First we introduced our current initiative, then we were informed about the Ph.D. (Chemistry, Biochemistry or Biotechnology) programme at ILS. With respect to collaborative research projects, in which ILS is interested, it turned out that, in addition to infection biology, the fields of neurobiology and cancer research are of particular interest.



In the BSL3-facility of the University of Hyderabad

The spin-off company **Cosmic** is developing continuously. It provides chemical synthesis service for the pharmaceutical and biotech and academic research institutions. During a laboratory tour we saw the facilities of the recently established spin-off **ZEPHASE** Therapeutics, which develops and offers zebrafish-based technologies and services for drug discovery and development. The construction of the University of Hyderabad BSL3-level laboratory building for infection research, also on contract basis, is close to completion.



VC Prof. R. Ramaswamy

In the afternoon we were received by the new VC of UoH, Prof. R. Ramaswamy, who confirmed the continuous support of UoH for the partnership with UoW. In the subsequent meeting with faculty of the School of **Life Sciences**, in particular with the Dean Prof. M. Ramanadham, Prof. M. Sritharan (Head Dept. of Animal Sciences) and Prof. K.V.A. Ramaiah (Dept. of Biochemistry), several topics for a potential scientific collaboration in infection biology were identified. In the evening Prof. Ramanadham gave us a survey of the current research facilities with cutting edge instrumentation and took us to the construction site of the huge new Life Sciences building complex which will open in 2012.



School of Life Sciences



Entrance aspect of New Life Science complex at UoH



High-end equipment

**Friday,**

**02.12.2011**

### **Continuation Hyderabad**

At the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics ([CDFD](#)), funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Govt. of India, we discussed new aspects of innate immunity and host cell signaling impacting infection, with Drs. S. Mukhopadhyay, R. Bandhari and S.K. Manna. We agreed that these are potential fields of research collaboration with UoW. In the meeting with the Director of CDFD, Dr. J. Gowrishankar, he declared his full support for such activities.



Business lunch at CDFD. Right side (back) Dr. K. Gowrishankar, Director CDFD

Back at the UoH, we had a discussion with Prof. G. Vemuganti, Dean Medical Sciences, about the development of this recently established school. Then we briefly met with the Pro-VC, Prof. E. Haribabu. Afterwards we had appointments to Prof. G.K. Reddy, School of Social Sciences, where we explored possibilities of cooperation in the field of education, and to A. Kulkarni, Head, Dept. of Sanskrit Studies, regarding computer linguistics.

**Saturday, 03.12.2011**

### **Continuation Hyderabad**

At the Indian Institute for Chemical Technology ([IITC](#)) we had a reunion with two alumni of UoW, Prof. V.J. Rao, Deputy Director at IITC, and Dr. S.K. Singh from the neighboring CCMB. Both were participants of the European-Indian Alumni Week at UoW in 2011 (report [here](#)). They gave us

detailed information on the very active “Indo-German Nachkontakt Association” (IGNA) in Hyderabad, together with Dr. M. Chandrasekharam (IITC), Humboldt fellow and IGNA secretary. We also identified two putative partners for research cooperation at UoW. Later Dr. Singh took us on a brief tour at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology ([CCMB](#)).



Laboratory discussion



NMR imaging facility

### **Sunday, 04.12.2011**

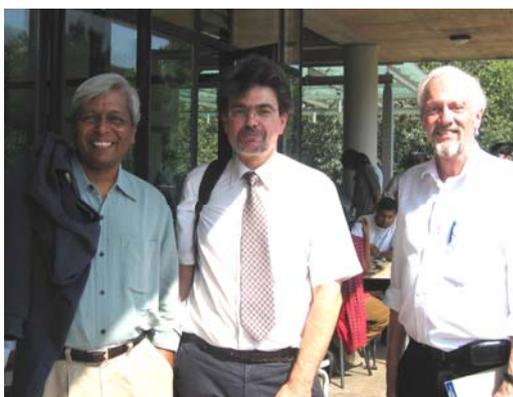
#### **Bangalore**

Travel to Bangalore. In the evening meeting with Prof. H. Brückner, Chairholder of [Indology](#) at UoW, who was on a research stay in India, and Mr. J. Kottayil, Executive Director of the State of [Bavaria](#) India Office.

### **Monday, 05.12.2011**

#### **Bangalore**

At the **National Center for Biological Sciences-[NCBS](#)** we had discussions with Prof. K. VijayRaghavan , Director NCBS, Dr. A. Sarin (Dean Academics) and Prof. M. Ramaswami (guest faculty from Trinity College Dublin). A tour through the construction site of the new NCBS building followed. There are already scientific collaborations with UoW since many years. These collaborations shall be extended and we agreed that a MoU should be concluded as soon as possible, also as a prerequisite for participation in the “New Passage” programme line. NCBS does not only perform basic research, it also offers high class PhD and MSc programmes.



Prof. K. VijayRaghavan, Director NCBS



New laboratory complex

In the afternoon we visited the Indian Institute of Science ([IISc](#)), first the Chairman of the International Relations Cell ([IRC](#)), Prof. G. Rangarajan. After a constructive discussion Prof. Rangarajan mentioned the possibility of agreements between individual departments of IISc and UoW, based on mutual research interests. Next we visited the IISc Dept. of [Aerospace Engineering](#). The Chairman, Prof. M.S. Bhat, and Prof. R. Padhi were very positive regarding a scientific cooperation with the department of Robotics at UoW. The same holds true for our dialogue partners at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Prof. R.M. Borges and Prof. P. Karanth, being open to cooperations with the Departments of Animal Ecology and Tropical Biology and Behavioral Physiology and Sociobiology at UoW.

In the evening we met the Deputy Consul General, H.-G. Löffler, and Dr. M. Mundakana from the German [Consulate General](#). We briefed them about the aim and results of our mission and were assured that the Consulate General will fully support future activities of UoW as well as students and researchers going to or coming from Karnataka.

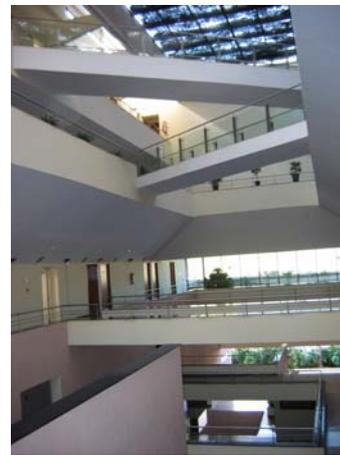
**Tuesday, 06.12.2011**

#### **Continuation Bangalore**

At the TIFR Centre for Applicable Mathematics ([TIFR CAM](#)) we were welcomed by the Dean, Dr. M. Ramaswamy , and a large number of faculty. After introducing UoW, we were informed about the infrastructure, research and study programs at the centre, e.g. the Integrated MSc-PhD Programme (Master 2yrs + PhD). It was agreed to proceed with the establishment of bilateral cooperation between the Institute of Mathematics in Würzburg and TIFR CAM.



Faculty of TIFR CAM



Interior of TIFR CAM

In the evening Dr. Schröder-Köhne departed to Germany, Prof. Kreft travelled on to Mysore.

**Friday, 16.12.2011**

During a stay with his collaboration partner at the University of Mysore ([UoM](#)), Prof. S. Gopal , Dept. of Studies in [Microbiology](#) , who is cooperating with UoW since long, Prof. Kreft met with Prof. R. Indira, Director of the [International Centre](#) of UoM. Prof. Indira expressed the interest of UoM in expanding the bilateral relations, both on the students' and faculty level and explained what UoM can provide in terms of language course, accommodation etc.



Left: Prof. R. Indira, Director International Center UoM



UoM International hostel

## Conclusion & Outlook

The delegation succeeded in promoting the India initiative of the University of Würzburg (UoW), in particular the “A New Passage to India” mobility programme as well as the CMI Würzburg, to a large number of Indian institutions, faculty and scientists in higher education and research.

Furthermore, the relations to German institutions in India could be tightened, especially to the DAAD office, the Embassy and DFG office (all New Delhi) as well as to the Consulate General in Bangalore.

As during last year’s visit, at all places visited the delegation met a genuine interest to strengthen existing links to UoW and to establish new ones. At the institutions with whom MoUs already exist (JNU, UoH, CDFD), new potential cooperation partners were contacted, also based on the preceding survey conducted at UoW. Furthermore, good relations could be established with top ranked institutions (NCBS, IISc, TIFR-CAM) at the science hub Bangalore and with the University of Mysore. MoUs with some of them are in preparation.

In our discussions with Indian scholars and scientist it became evident that the interest in academic exchange and scientific collaboration with Germany in general and with UoW in particular is growing. To a significant extent this is due to the progressing internationalization of UoW and the establishment of graduate schools. The latter not only offer more structured curricula and mentoring, their relatively large quota of foreign students also lowers the language and cultural barrier and helps in popularizing Germany and UoW internationally.

UoW should take advantage of those positive developments. In our opinion, the university as a whole should consolidate the collaboration with the above-mentioned partner institutions. This includes the organization of bilateral seminars and workshops in the near future. But at the same time it should encourage and support the various already existing or envisaged individual bilateral activities which became apparent through the university-wide survey last year.

We have been informed that German and Indian funding agencies are in the process of establishing improved funding schemes and new facilities, e.g. the recently established “Indo-German Science & Technology Center” (IGSTC), and, in future, a “German House for Research and Innovation-GHRI”. This enhanced infrastructure for collaborative research projects in combination with a closely coordinated Indo-German network at the University of Würzburg will surely yield exciting new opportunities in science and research in the future.