

Feasibility Study for Establishment of International Institute of Comparative Civilizations at Taxila 1997

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Abstract

The article presents a document of great importance for the history of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations. It is the first feasibility study prepared in 1988 under the guidance of A.H. Dani as a blueprint for what was to become the Institute. The publication of this document thirtyfive years later shows once again anticipatory spirit of its inspirer.

Keywords: Taxila, Institute, Comparative Civilizations.

Editorial Note

To promote the concept of multiple identities of humankind but having common heritage, the UNESCO launched the “Silk Roads Project - Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue 1988- 1997”. It prompted extensive study of cultures and civilizations of the vast territories across Asia, northern Africa and parts of Europe from Nara to Venice. Five scientific expeditions were also organized on the Desert Route, Maritime Route, Steppe Route, Nomads Route and Buddhist Route. The Project also included establishment of six international institutes, one of which was to be located at Taxila near Islamabad, Pakistan. In 1996, the author was commissioned by the UNESCO to undertake feasibility study for establishment of “International Institute of Comparative Civilizations (IICC) at Takshaschila (Taxila).” The idea was originally conceived by the renowned scholar, Professor Ahmad Hasan Dani. A proposal was prepared and finally presented by the author to the delegates in Paris, discussed and unanimously approved. The IICC was established immediately at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad until it was possible to move to the proposed location at Giri in Taxila valley. It is still functioning at Islamabad under the changed name of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (TIAC).

Dr. Ghani-ur-Rehman, current Director of the TIAC was surprised to know that a copy of original report as submitted to the UNESCO existed. He insisted to publish it since it reflected original thinking on the subject and what has been accomplished so far or needs to be done in future. The text remains unchanged.

1. Introduction: A Historical Background

The beautiful valley of Takshashila which is now known as Taxila, has been a very famous centre of learning in ancient times. The renowned University of Takshaschila has been very well known in the ancient world. As a centre of higher learning and Buddhist art, history, and culture, Taxila played a leading role in the formation and development of human institutions particularly in Asia throughout history for more than 1000 years beginning from the 6th century B.C. Today, innumerable Buddhist religious and settlement sites which are dotting the valley of Taxila bear testimony to the great historical and cultural significance of this area. Taxila was located on the ancient Silk Route and therefore, it was a meeting place of many cultures, religions, and traditions which gave a unique character to the culture of the Gandhara region, of which Taxila valley was an integral part (Figure 1). It seems very appropriate to establish an institute of higher learning at such a cultural and historical centre as Taxila, devoted to the study of comparative religions, civilizations and languages. Such a step would be in line with the traditions of ancient university of Takshaschila and also precisely within the principles and objectives of the UNECSO relating to the promotion of education and cultural awareness among developing countries, and strengthening of cooperation among member states.

The ancient remains of Taxila are on UNESCO's World Heritage list and fall within a "Conservation Zone" declared by the Government of Pakistan and are "protected" under the Antiquities Act, 1975. It is located next to the Federal capital area of Islamabad on the main National Highway and principal Rail road, about 25 kilometers from Islamabad which is also an international airport. Besides the ancient remains, the modern towns of Taxila, Wah, and Hasan Abdal are also located in the fertile valley of Taxila.

2. Fields of Study/Discipline

It is proposed that in an international institute functioning in collaboration and affiliation with other related institutions of the region may focus on the following three major disciplines:

- a) Comparative Languages and Linguistics
- b) Comparative Civilizations
- c) Comparative Religions

3. Twee of Academic Institute

The subjects mentioned under (B) above, are of specialized kind and therefore, should focus on in-depth study, research and thorough analysis of comparative religions, civilizations, and languages of Asia and other parts of the world. It is hoped that the International Institute of Comparative Civilizations (hereafter IICC) would emerge as the first of its kind for the promotion of world religions, languages and civilizations.

It is suggested that the Institute of Comparative Civilizations at Taxila (IICC) with interregional linkages and international status should be a high level research institute awarding M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in three major disciplines and related fields. It is proposed to be a very special institution catering to the requirements of international community of scholars and students, and also in line with the spirit of UNESCO in promoting cooperation and cultural appreciation of human kind. It should emerge as an independent institution located in South Asia having affiliations with relevant institutions in Asia and other countries.

4. Linking Arrangements

The International Institute of Comparative Civilizations (IICC) would establish institutional linkages/affiliations particularly with those of other countries in Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, the Gulf and China. The IICC will collaborate in particular, with those institutions which concentrate on ancient civilizations and cultural heritage as the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) at Samarkand. There are several other related research and teaching institutions namely Post-Graduate Research Institute, Colombo, Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute, Pune, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, IsMEO, Rome, CNRS, Paris etc. The IICC will remain open to any kind of academic linkage and any research programmes with other institutions of the world, for which modalities may have to be worked out.

5. Creating a MNEESCO Chair

A special Chair of Professor may be created by the UNESCO in one of the three disciplines, preferably in Comparative Religions who may be selected through an open competition. The Chair may be given for at least three years with an additional period of two years, if no substitute is possible to find.

6. Human and Technical Resources

Human resources

The IICC will require teaching faculty and supporting staff in the first place and an organization for management of the three disciplines. The three departments will require some supporting and secretariat staff which are listed below.

For managing the IICC, it is proposed to constitute a Board of Governors on which University Grants Commission, Ministry of Education and UNESCO should be represented. In addition, two more members who may be major contributors of funds be included in the governing board. They may have an elected Chairperson. To begin with, a Project Director may be appointed to start managing the affairs of IICC, who would then occupy the place of Director/Vice Chancellor when new campus of the Institute is established.

List of personnel for teaching

- a) Three Professors
- b) Three Associate Professors
- c) Three Assistant Professors
- d) Three Assistants
- e) Six Naib Qasids
- f) Three Watchmen

List of personnel for management

- a) Director/Vice Chancellor

- b) Secretary to the Director and Board of Governors
- c) Registrar
- d) Accounts Officer
- e) Administrative Officer
- f) One Clerk
- g) Four Naib Qasids
- h) 10 Watch & Ward Staff
- i) 1 Driver
- j) Librarian
- k) Assistant Librarian
- l) Computer Lab Engineer/Incharge
- m) Computer Lab Technician
- n) 5 Gardeners
- o) 5 Sweepers
- p) 2 Electricians
- q) 2 Plumbers
- r) 1 Electrician
- s) Cafeteria Incharge
- t) 2 Hostel Wardens

7. Technical Resources

For the planning and designing the IICC buildings and implementing an approved scheme, technical manpower is available from within the country but should be engaged through an open competition and selection. The Board of Governors of IICC will be responsible to locate such technical and professional personnels from Pakistan and other countries.

Laboratory Facilities

The IICC besides teaching, training and research, will also be engaged in the research and documentation of cultural data on ancient civilizations, monuments and sites, epigraphical and other records of human kind in Asia. For this purpose, essential equipments to give first aid to the works of art found in the field may be obtained. However, for detailed analysis of

materials of different kind and adopting appropriate measures for their preservation, the Conservation Laboratory at Taxila which is being established at the Taxila Museum Campus will be utilized. This new Conservation Laboratory at Taxila will be fully equipped to undertake any kind of conservation on any kind of material. Therefore, there will be no need to duplicate the efforts by creating a new laboratory at IICC. In fact, the Conservation Laboratory at Taxila may be affiliated with the IICC.

Library Facilities

Various national and international organizations will be persuaded to donate books to the IICC. In fact, efforts have already been initiated. The Royal Asiatic Society, London has sent a set of their journals for the library which has already been received in Islamabad. Some Pakistani scholars are also willing to donate their personal libraries to IICC wherever such a library is established. It is also intended to request the foreign teams and scholars working in Pakistan and educational or research institutions of various countries to donate books and journals to the library.

Equipments

For the procurement of equipments, it is proposed to request the UNESCO and some donor countries to provide necessary equipments for teaching and research. The following is the tentative list of equipments to be acquired.

- a) Photographic equipments consisting of video and other cameras, cassette recorder, camera stand, enlarger, photo laboratory material and equipment.
- b) Micro film reader
- c) Photocopying machine
- d) Audio visual aids, such as projectors, screens etc.
- e) Computers; laptop and desktop, laser printer, voltage stabilizers
- f) Fax machine and telephones and internet facilities
- g) Survey and drawing equipment and materials
- h) Vehicle ,double-cabin or large jeep type

- i) Storage almirahs, racks and cabinets for maps, photographs etc.
- j) Furniture for various technical sections, library racks, tables, chairs, first aid lab, laboratory tables and materials.

8. Proposed Site for Establishment Of IICC And Technical Features

Temporary Location

To begin with, it is proposed that the Centre for the Study of Central Asian Civilization already functioning at the Quid-e-Azam University campus, be upgraded to the level of an Institute. The space for office and classrooms is already available. The Vice Chancellor has agreed in principle, to vacate the adjacent Sociology Department and hand it to the Centre for Central Asian Civilization. The space will be available from the Quid-e-Azam University free of cost temporarily. It will consist of five halls and several rooms which should be sufficient to make a beginning of IICC until a separate campus is established in the Taxila valley. The Vice Chancellor of the Quid-e-Azam University informally has agreed in principle to these arrangements of accomodating IICC by upgrading the existing Centre for the Study of Central Asian Civilization to the level of an Institute. This matter will be placed before the Quid-e-Azam University Academic Council for passing a resolution which will have to be approved by the University Syndicate. The Academic Council is going to meet very soon and is expected to receive permission to teach at M.Phil and Ph.D. level in the three subjects specified under the fields of study (above).

It seems that there will be no waiting period for starting the IICC. The objectives of establishing an Institute can immediately be fulfilled first at the Quid-e-Azam University campus and then at its proper location.

Permanent Site of IICC

It is necessary to have new construction according to the special requirements of IICC. The Centre for the Study of Central Asian Civilization at Quid-e-Azam University where the proposed Institute may be located temporarily will not require any modifications because the space will not be available for permanent housing of the IICC.

Location of Proposed Site

The Taxila valley was re-examined by this author with the purpose of finding a suitable place for the location of IICC. After one week of travels and study of topography, it seems that the most appropriate place would be somewhere between the triangle marked by Dharmarajika Stupa, Jaulian Monastery and Giri. (Figure 2)

Rationale for Selecting Giri

The proposed site near Giri between the triangular area indicated on the map seems to be ideal for possible location of the IICC. It is somewhat away from the main urban centre and is marked by a beautiful setting of natural environment. The Buddhist monasteries and stupas were usually located in the most picturesque areas of Swat and Taxila. Similarly, this Institute devoted to the study of comparative civilizations of human kind should be located at an equally beautiful place. The existing archaeological remains of the fortress of Giri and Buddhist monastic establishment including the monuments of Islamic period could be integrated within the building complex.

An access metalled road is already provided to the area which can be widened and the area could be developed further. The area is also very easily accessible from Islamabad and Taxila because of its proximity to both the places and is on the Silk Route and National Highway leading to Peshawar and beyond to Afghanistan on the one hand, and to China across the Karakorum Highway on the other. Different types of shops (meat, vegetable, fruit etc.) are also located in the nearby towns where electricity is also available at the site.

Alternative Sites

If Giri is not found a suitable site for any reason, then it is proposed to locate the IICC on the road to Khanpur, either near Mohra Moradu or Jaulian. This area is already well developed where all the facilities such as electricity, gas and communications are available. This area is also equally beautiful as we go inside the valley.

Acquisition of Land

It is suggested to 500 acres of state land may be marked for this purpose and the Government of Pakistan be persuaded to donate this piece of land for the International Institute of Comparative Civilizations at Taxila.

Types of Buildings to be Established

The following categories of buildings are proposed to be established.

- a) Academic Block
- b) Administration Block
- c) Library
- d) Residential Block (for students and staff)
- e) Auditorium
- f) Sports Complex
- g) Meditation Hall
- h) Market Place
- i) Computer Centre
- j) Cafeteria

9. Area Covered by Building Type

Area for all the buildings of the Institute is given as under. (For details, see Annexure 1)

1	Academic Block	21,867
2	Administrative Block	3,125
3	Library Building	18,000
4	Computer Centre	5,000
5	Cafeteria	1,559
6	Meditation Hall	5,175
7	Sports Complex	12,102
8	Auditorium	8,000
9	Market Place	2, 144
10	Residential block	
11	For Staff Residences	74,500
12	Hostels For Students	57,642
	TOTAL AREA	209,114

10. Estimated Budget for Establishing the Institute

Construction Cost

The cost of construction includes the woodwork, doors, windows, glass and electric wiring. All the furnishings are exclusives. The cost of construction of each part of the Institute is given as under. (For details see Annexure 1.)

	Particulars	Area in Square Feet	Cost per Square Feet	Total Cost
1	Academic Block	21,867	900	19,680,300
2	Administrative Block	3,125	700	2,187,500
3	Library Building	18,000	800	14,400,000
4	Computer Centre	5,000	600	3,000,000
5	Cafeteria	1,559	500	779,500
6	Meditation Hall	5,175	500	2,587,500
7	Sports Complex	12,102	600	7,261,200
8	Auditorium	8,000	800	6,400,000
9	Market Place	2,144	400	857,600
10	Residential block			
	For Staff Residences	74,500	500	37,250,000
	Hostels For Students	57,642	500	28,821,000
		209,114		123,224,600
TOTAL AREA		209,114		123,224,600

OR US\$ =3,080,615

[1\$ = Rs. 40]

Cost of Developing the Area

Cost will have to be incurred on developing the infrastructure for the Institute and also on landscaping.

Particulars	
1	Development of Infrastructure (Levelling, Roads, Sewage etc) ia 21% of cost of construction of covered Area
	25,877,166
2	Land Development for Plantation and Landscaping ia 2% of the cost of construction of covered Area
	2,464,492
<hr/>	
TOTAL	28,341,658

Cost of Fixed Assets

Particulars	
1	Cost of Furnishing and Cost of Fixed Assets and Equipments to be Purchased for the Institute R 72a of construction cost of covered Area.
	88,721,712
<hr/>	
TOTAL	88,721,712

Or US \$ =2,218,043

Total cost of establishing the institute

Particulars			
1	Construction Cost	123,224,600	3,080,615
2	Cost of Developing the Area	28,341,658	708,541
3	Cost of Fixed Assets	88,721,712	2,218,043
	TOTAL	<u>240,287,970</u>	6,007,199

[15 - Rs. 40]

Estimated cost of running the institute

Following is the per month cost to be incurred by the institute.

1	Salaries Payable to all the Staff	500,000
2	Telephone , Electric and Gas bills to be paid	200,000
	TOTAL	<u>700,009</u>

11. Ways and Means of Financing

Funds available from University Grants Commission

The University Grant Commission, Islamabad, has agreed in principle to provide funding for one Professor for teaching Linguistics and Comparative Languages. Qualified persons are available from the Asian countries for these subjects. Similarly, suitable scholars to teach Comparative Civilizations may be possible to support financially by the Government of Pakistan or through private donors.

Campaign to Raise Funds

An international campaign may be launched to raise funds from different sources because the UNESCO may not be in a position to provide all the funding for the establishment of IICC, construction of all the buildings, provision of requisite equipments and to meet recurring costs needed to run the Institute. The Centre for the Study of Central Asian Civilization has Rs.300,000 as fixed deposit, out of which the Journal of Central Asia is published regularly. The following measures are proposed to raise funds for the IICC.

Efforts may be made to create endowments by different governments, institutions, industries or multinational companies for creating chairs and for construction of various components of the Institute. The foreign scholars and international teams working in Pakistan especially those from the Buddhist countries may be persuaded and encouraged to generate funds for donation to the Institute. They can be encouraged to construct buildings within the approved plan of overall development and layout of the Institute which can be appropriately named after the donors. This would provide them a base for their research works in Pakistan and adjoining regions and opportunities to interact with scholars from different countries.

A Pakistan-Japan Colloquium is going to be held in September 1997 on the significance of Gandhara in human history. Funds could be raised on that occasion. Similar colloquia could be held in Pakistan by other Buddhist countries for fund raising.

The UNESCO could provide equipments and funding for supporting the UNESCO Chair at IICC. Other Chairs could be funded by Pakistan and other countries.

A special cell for raising funds could be created right in the beginning and under supervision of the Board of Governors so that while the IICC is coming up, sufficient funds are generated and are available for utilizing to run the Institute. It seems that eventually the IICC will represent a real international centre of scholars from all the regions and world institutions where specialized studies relating to the development of human civilizations will be carried out.

Suggested project schedule.

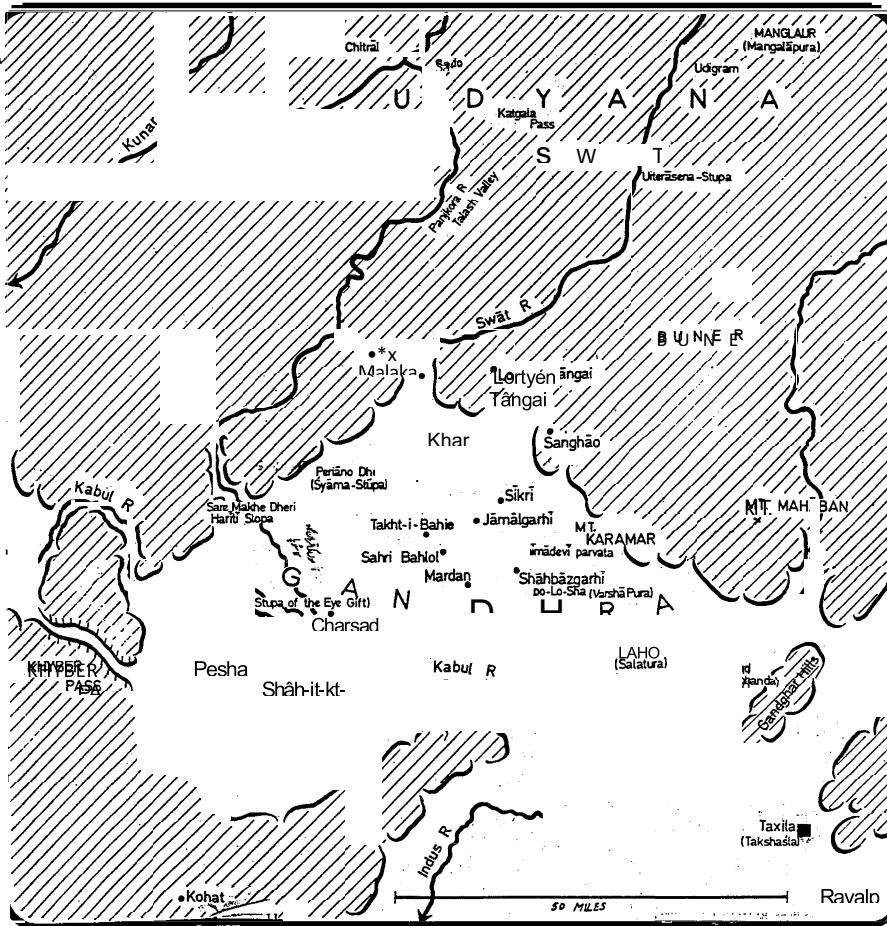


Figure 1 - The location of Takshaschila (Taxila) in the famous Gandhara region of Pakistan.

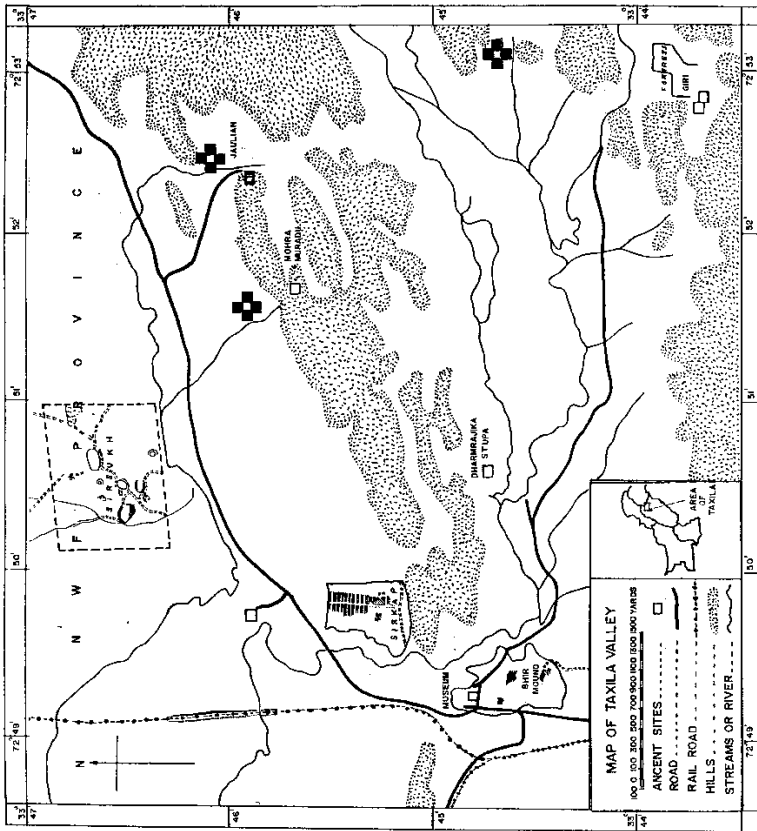


Figure 2: The Taxila Valley showing suitable places for possible location of the proposed International Institute of Comparative Civilizations.

As already mentioned, a beginning can be made at the existing Centre for the Study of Central Asian Civilization at the Quid-e-Azam University where suitable space will be available free of cost belonging to the Centre and the Sociology Department. Simultaneously a preliminary work for the designing and planning of the IICC at the proposed site may be taken up and completed within 5 years or earlier, if possible, so that the IICC could be shifted to a new campus.

It is proposed that all the buildings of the IICC be completed by 2002 A.D. or in five years and then, the Institute be shifted from its temporary location in Islamabad to the permanent site in the Takshashila valley.

ANNEXURE

Details of all the buildings to be constructed for the Takshashila Institute.

1. Academic block

	DESCRIPTION	Dimensions	Square Feet
1	3 Class Rooms	30 x 25	2,250
2	1 Laboratory	50 x 30	1,500
3	1 Toilet	20 x 12	240
4	Office For Professor	15 x 14	210
5	Office for Associate Professor	14 x 12	168
6	Office For Assistant Professor	12 x 12	144
7	Office For Secretary/Assistant	10 x 12	120
8	1 Toilet	6 x 8	48
			4,680
	Area Covered by Three Academic Blocks = 3 x 4680		14,040
	Add		+
9	1 Common Room for All Male Students	17 x 14	238
10	1 Common Room for All Female Students	15 x 12	180
11	Toilets For female students	10 x 12	120
			14,578
	Add 50% for circulation		7,289
	TOTAL AREA OF ACADEMIC BLOCK		21,867

2. Administrative Block

	DESCRIPTION	Dimensions	Square Feet
1	Director	17 x 14	238
2	Toilet	8 x 8	64
3	Office of Secretary/Assistant	12 x 15	180
4	Treasurer's or Accountant's Office	12 x 15	180
5	Cashier's Office	12 x 10	120
6	Registrar's Office	12 x 15	180
7	Office of Assistant to the Registrar	12 x 12	144
8	Record Room	12 x 15	180
9	Information officer/ Receptionist's office	12 x 15	180
10	Toilet Block	16 x 12	192
11	Committee Room	25 x 17	425
			2,083
	Add 50% for ventilation		1,042
	TOTAL AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK		3,125

3. Cafeteria

	DESCRIPTION	Dimensions	Square Feet
1	Seating Capacity For 35 people [@ 25 sq. ft. (5x5) per person]		875
2	Kitchen	12 x 15	180
3	Store	8 x 10	80
4	Desk of Cafeteria Incharge	8 x 8	64
			1,199
	Add 30% for ventilation		360
	TOTAL AREA OF CAFETERIA		1,559

4. Meditation Hall

	DESCRIPTION	Dimensions	Square Feet
1	Meditation Room	30 x 18	540
2	Toilet + Wash Room	15 x 10	150
			690
	5 Meditation Rooms will be built = 5 x 690		3,450
	Add 50% for ventilation and lobby		1,725
	TOTAL AREA OF MEDITATION HALL		5,175

5. Sports Complex

	DESCRIPTION		Square Feet
1	Badminton Court	55 x 25	1,375
2	Basket Ball Court	100 x 60	6,000
3	Squash Court	50 x 30	1,500
4	Table Tennis Court	23 x 20	460
5	Toilets and Lockers For Male Students	30 x 15	450
6	Toilets and Lockers For Female Students	20 X 15	300
			10,085
	Add 20% for waiting and ventilation		2,017
	TOTAL AREA OF SPORTS COMPLEX		12,102

6. Market Place

	DESCRIPTION	Dimensions	Square Feet
1	Doctor's Clinic / Dispensary	14 x 18	252
2	Barber Shop	12 x 15	180
3	Laundry Shop	12 x 15	180
4	Book Store Photostating Shop	14 x 18	252
5	General Store	12 x 15	180
6	Bank	17 x 25	425
7	Public Call Office	12 x 15	180
			1,649
	Add 30% for Ventilation		495
	TOTAL AREA OF MARKET PLACE		2,144

Other perishable items like meat, poultry, vegetables, fruit etc can be bought from the nearby towns.

7. Library Building

	DESCRIPTION	Square Feet
1	Librarian Desk	
2	Assistant Librarian	
3	Reference Section	
4	Micro Films	
5	Reading Areas	
6	Shelves For 100,000 Books	
	TOTAL AREA OF LIBRARY BUILDING	18,000

8. Computer Centre

	DESCRIPTION	Square Feet
1	Computer Centre Incharge's Office	
2	Technical Support Room	
3	Store Room	
4	Supervisor's Desk	
5	Computer lab for 35 students	
	TOTAL AREA OF COMPUTER CENTRE	5,000