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Auroville Bulletin 65

Satprem visa cancelled, Forest finances cut, New email services

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Monday, 26th June 2023

Note: There are important actions to take at the end of each Bulletin, if you are reading on your phone you may need to click 'see more' to view the entire bulletin.

Please find a glossary of acronyms and terms used in this bulletin [here](#).

Urgent actions needed

- **Sign the petition in support of Satprem:** You can sign the petition by following [this link](#). More information on this issue can be found below.
- **Switch to the new community-supported email system:** For more information on how to get a new @auroville.community email address, please see below.
- **Call for support for forest workers' livelihoods:** As the Forest Group budget has been cut, more than 60 forest workers will be without an income from next year onwards. If you are willing to contribute to support them, please reach us at evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com
- **BCC calls for support for Aurovilians:** An increasing number of Aurovilians, now including an additional 40 foresters, have been cut off from their maintenances due to unilateral decisions of the AVFO. The RA BCC still seeks to support these people. If you can help, please see [here](#) for more information, and email BCC on bccoffice@auroville.services or bccauroville@gmail.com.
- **Financial support for legal fees:** If you can donate towards legal and delegation fees, please email evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com. Please see [here](#) for more information about why further financial assistance is necessary.
- **Help with the AVC room vigil:** Please participate! For nearly one year the community has held a 24/7 vigil in the AVC room in Town Hall. **More people are needed** to ensure the round-the-clock presence. Please contact avcouncil@auroville.services, WhatsApp 94430 03617 to sign up. See [here](#) for more information.
- **Join the Wednesdays for Auroville meetings:** There is a weekly community meeting held at the Tibetan Pavilion, every Wednesday 5:00-6:30 pm.

Hot Topics

Satprem forced to leave India

Satprem, the founder of the [Auroville Earth Institute](#) and resident of Auroville for 34 years, was asked to meet the FRRO in Chennai on Monday 19th June. During this meeting, Satprem was informed that the Secretary of the AVFO had written a letter to the FRRO, revoking the recommendation for his Entry visa, despite his visa being valid till December 2025. It is the very first time that a residents' visa is cancelled while still valid, on the sole recommendation of the AVFO Secretary. As a result, Satprem was issued an "Exit permit" and told to leave the country on or before the 1st of July 2023.



Over the past months, Satprem has played a crucial role in documenting the Crown Road works executed by the AVFO's ATDC and the CPWD. He created several technical reports which can be [found here](#). He also communicated to the Governing Board, the International Advisory Council, and other external authorities about the unfolding of events in Auroville. Even though the reason was not specified, it is likely that this is why Satprem was told to leave the country. In the past few days, over 50 letters of support to Satprem from across India and the globe were sent to higher authorities, such as [this letter](#) from Dr Sehdev Kumar.

Appeal in support of Satprem: A letter of appeal in support of Satprem addressed to the higher authorities to allow him to stay in India can be found here:

<https://forms.gle/eQLiJWRv6osczGz59>

Please note that the names of signatories will not be shared publicly. Over 2000 individuals have already signed it, and each voice counts - please add yours if you resonate!

Cutting of all funds for Auroville forests

In [an email](#) dated 21st June 2023, Chandresh and Torkil of the AVFO 'FAMC' announced that the Forest Group will no longer be receiving any of its budget or its maintenances. The email was sent to a few foresters and no official communication was sent to the Forest Group. This comes in the third week of a month in which already the necessary budget had been withheld without reason, leaving foresters to pay forest workers out of pocket. The move affects approximately 40 Aurovilians on maintenance and around 60 workers who are paid from the monthly budget. The reason given for the sudden cut by the AVFO 'FAMC' was that the Forest Group "does not seem to have any willingness to change and be part of a fast developing Auroville according to its purpose." A rumour that the Forest Group did not submit its accounts for the last financial year is false, as all obligations have been taken care of by its administrative team.

The AVFO 'FAMC' statement does not clarify how the gratuity (severance package for each year that they have been employed) to the forest workers is to be paid, as the cutting of the budget essentially fires the forest workers. No consideration was mentioned regarding the many foresters who spent their life savings on greening Auroville and who rely on a maintenance for their basic survival. No bridging maintenance has been offered, although those in financial difficulty were invited to contact the AVFO 'BCC'.

If you want to help support the foresters and forest workers financially, please reach out to us at evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com.

Clearing in Revelation Forest

Since the first week of June 2023, the Land Board has been clearing areas of Revelation Forest to prepare for the Outer Ring Road (ORR) under direction of the AVFO 'ATDC'. Revelation is one of Auroville's largest forests in the Northern Forest area and has been maintained as a future park by its stewards, with extensive walkways already in place. The forest includes one area called the Sanctuary, which has no human interference and can therefore house animal species that need undisturbed areas to live in. On the 12th June, when the Land Board started clearing this sensitive area, they were stopped by the stewards and other residents.



The Forest Group, in a statement, has noted that the Master Plan (Perspective 2025) does not include the Outer Ring Road, and that the community has not reached an agreement on its implementation. Moreover, the National Green Tribunal has prohibited development and clearing of greenery in Auroville outside of the Crown “until proper township plans are accepted and environmental clearance is obtained.” They also note that implementation of the ORR is unfeasible at this stage, as it cuts through Kottakarai village and parts of Edayanchavadi. You can [read their full statement here](#).

A [legal notice](#) regarding this clearing among other issues, has since been sent to the Secretary and a number of residents.

Takeover of Food Link and Farm Group

Food Link serves as an intermediary between farms and consumers - individuals, cooperatives such as Pour Tous, and Auroville restaurants. On Tuesday 20th June, the long-standing executives of Food Link – Sumadhi and Angurajan, working there for 25 and 7 years respectively – were dismissed without prior notice or explanation or following due process. This dismissal was done by a new “Farm Service” constituted by the Office of the Secretary. Members of this Farm Service are Anitha, Gino, and Prasad. Anshul (AuroOrchard) has since resigned as he did not agree with the way this new group was moving forward. Emails from the Farm Service, however, are still signed with his name.

The next day, on 20th June, all farm executives received [an email](#) from the new “Farm Service” announcing that “FAMC & Farm Service are currently restructuring Foodlink” and further adding that “the [farms] core group and sub-group no longer exists. All relevant matters concerning farming must be addressed to the Farm Service”. The ‘core group’ and ‘sub-groups’ referred to are groups that the farmers themselves have created to enable better communication and to help them in their work. This move by the AVFO restricts the ability for Aurovilians working in the farms to gather, share, and organize their work independently.

New email service for AV Community

In response to the takeover of the auroville.org.in domain and the censorship that followed, the RA Working Committee announced the creation of a new email service and digital workspace under the domain [@auroville.community](#). “Our new system is managed by the community, for the community. The usage rules are clear, publicly available [here](#), and will be enforced consistently. Any disputes will be handled in an open, transparent, and documented manner. The management of this domain will remain apolitical, and no other domains will be blacklisted in an attempt to censor dissenting opinions. Our administrators are known and trusted members of the community who have signed Non-Disclosure Agreements to protect the privacy of users.”

Accounts have been created and emails have been sent individually to all Aurovilians, Newcomers and Friends of Auroville with their personal login information, including their new email ID and a temporary password. If you have not received this email, you can [fill this form](#) or contact admin@auroville.community. Additionally, you can [click here](#) to read this new service’s documentation and answers to frequently asked questions, or visit the help desk at the RA WCom’s office (ex-Koodam space, opposite the AV Library) on Friday afternoons from 2:30 to 4:30 pm and on Saturday mornings from 10 am to 12:30 pm.

Attempt to enforce @auroville.org.in email addresses

In an attempt to enforce the use of @auroville.org.in email addresses, Mr Sathyanarayan, Accounts Officer of the AVFO, sent out [a massbulletin](#) on 12th June 2023. He stated that all registered residents (Aurovilians) are expected to use an email address with the format @auroville.org.in and that “all trustees, units, services managers are to only use @auroville.org.in” to correspond within and without Auroville.

Since the AVFO took over the administration of the auroville.org.in domain in June 2022, some people have been blocked from accessing their personal and professional inboxes, often without prior notice or explanation. Services, groups and other units that were taken over lost access to their inboxes without notice, causing many residents to be reluctant in using @auroville.org.in email ids.

In a response to Mr Sathyanarayan, the RA Working Committee underlined that the new administrators of @auroville.org.in are unknown and have not signed the required Non-Disclosure Agreement, meaning the private data of @auroville.org.in users is at risk. Therefore, the new anonymous administrators “can technically do anything to emails addressed to or coming from this domain: read, modify, delete, impersonate or block deliveries and receipts, including all the history, in targeted, manual, or mass automated operations”. They further emphasized that “The unfriendly appropriation of both material and intangible resources has ... broken the relationship of trust between Aurovilians, and created moral and financial damage which is almost impossible to quantify, since it affects the daily work and personal life of thousands of people. Consequently, many users have decided to use other email providers, which follow due legal requirements and have clear contracts with their users.”

Attempted takeover of RAS

On 23rd May 2023, the Residents' Assembly Service (RAS) team discovered that the locks to their office at Town Hall had been changed without notice. A massbulletin sent by the AVFO 'WCom' on the same day, announced a "new team" put in place via [Office Order](#). The members named on the Office Order were: Rama Narayana, Hans Van Baaren, Eglè Borchardt, Jacques Rossier and Sathish Aramugam. Sathish had [resigned](#) from the RAS earlier on 5th May and expressed that he did not intend to join the team announced by the AVFO.

A [massbulletin](#) sent by the RA WCom stated that "The RAS is an internal facilitation body for the Residents' Assembly (RA) and therefore an Office Order to appoint new members is not applicable." The massbulletin also reminded that there is a pending court case in the Madras High Court to quash the recent Office Orders that have come from the AVFO. New members were recently selected for the RAS via due process and the current membership is Giovanni, Manas, Mandakini, Robert, Sandeep, Satprem, Tatiana, Veronique. The RAS are now holding their open house in the AV Council room at Town Hall 10-12 am on Tuesdays and they can be contacted via their email address, raservice@auroville.services.

Other updates and Information

Entry fee for Bharat Nivas

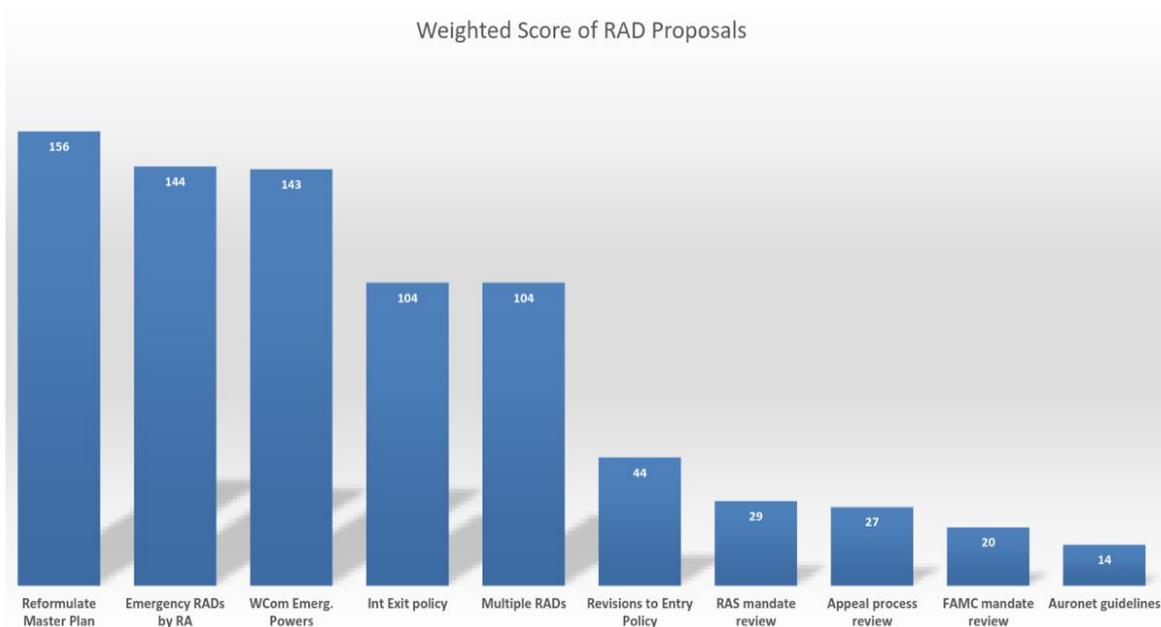
At the occasion of a new exhibition in Bharat Nivas, a paid registration system has been put in place to enter the venue. Tourists and guests visiting the Bharat Nivas compound now have to pay 100 Rs each with another additional 100 Rs to attend the exhibition, according to [the picture of a bill](#) which has recently been circulated. Reportedly, some tourists are confused as they are routed through Bharat Nivas and believe that they are paying for a ticket to enter the Matrimandir viewing point.

Until now all public places within Auroville have remained free of cost. With the start of a ticketing system for entering the Bharat Nivas and this new paid exhibition, there are concerns about Auroville becoming a paid tourist-oriented destination.

Auroville Council RAD Poll Outcome

At the General Meeting held on 22nd April 2023, a list of Residents Assembly Decision-Making (RAD) proposals were introduced by the organising team and the required number of signatures (at least 60 for each) were collected. Subsequently, the AV Council sent a [poll](#) of the RAD proposals out to the community, asking for the list to be ranked by order of preference. The results of the poll are shown below.

RAD Proposal	No. voted 1	No. voted 2	No. voted 3	Weighted score
Reformulate Master Plan	35	12	27	156
Emergency RADs by RA	20	33	18	144
WCom Emerg. Powers	31	19	12	143
Int Exit policy	16	18	20	104
Multiple RADs	14	20	22	104
Revisions to Entry Policy	5	11	7	44
RAS mandate review	3	6	8	29
Appeal process review	2	8	5	27
FAMC mandate review	2	3	8	20
Auronet guidelines	4	0	2	14



As announced in a [massbulletin](#) on 15th June 2023, the three most popular RAD proposals were; 1) To reformulate the Master Plan 2) To allow the RA to initiate emergency RADs 3) To give the Working Committee Emergency Powers. The AV Council will now begin the process of activating the RADs with the petitioners.

Media & Other Links

- **'Residents call it retaliation' (TheNewsMinute)** : An online article on Satprem's situation.

In the next issue...

We could not cover all topics in this 65th issue of the Bulletin, and will therefore continue covering some of the events that happened in May & June 2023 in the upcoming issue.

About us

We are a group of Aurovilians who are actively involved in understanding the current crisis situation in Auroville in order to find a way forward together.

We stand for:

- Respecting our community processes for decision-making
- A collaborative approach in developing Auroville using integrated methods such as the Dreamweaving initiative
- Transparency and fairness in the organisation of Auroville
- Creating unity with our diverse voices

Please note that the website <https://standforaurovilleunity.com/> contains a great deal of information and a detailed timeline.

With regard to future actions, those who have particular skills such as writing, social media, film editing etc - you are welcome to write to evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com.

We hope this has been helpful. Let's keep working to find a way to bring us closer together to the beautiful dream of human unity in Auroville. We can do it... together.

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