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# Auroville Bulletin 67

## Ongoing RADs, Ayarpadi farm takeover, visa update

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Thursday, 3d August 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

- **Support for Maintenances:** An increasing number of Aurovilians have been cut off from their Maintenance, and are in need of support. For more information, please contact the BCC: [bccoffice@auroville.services](mailto:bccoffice@auroville.services). If you wish to support the Farm or Forest Group as a whole, please contact us at [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com) and we will redirect you as needed.
- **Financial support for legal fees:** If you can donate towards legal and delegation fees, please email [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@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 8 months 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](mailto: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

### **RADs on Emergency Powers and Emergency RADs**



There are currently two Residents' Assembly Decision-making processes (RADs) ongoing:

1. Proposal to give the Residents' Assembly the power to call for an Emergency RAD with 300 signatures (until now, only the Working Committee could call for an Emergency RAD). You can read the full proposal [here](#).
2. Proposal to give the RA WCom (Aravinda, Chali, Hemant, Illyabharathy, Maël, Sauro, Valli) Emergency Powers for the next 6 months to appoint people to Auroville's organisational groups as needed to ensure speedy group formation in these exceptional circumstances. You can read the full proposal [here](#).

The petitioners' representatives have shared [a message](#) urging people to vote. They note that voting is still important despite the AVFO unwillingness to recognize the RA, as it shows the AVFO, the courts, and the community that the RA is still seeking to express its voice and to use its right to self-determination as a community. It also ensures that the RA has the tools to continue its work.

**Residents will be able to participate and vote until Sunday 13th August 2023.** To vote, they can:

1. Check their personal email ID and open the email sent by the RAS on 29th July. It contains a personalized voting link that can be used for voting.
2. Visit the RAS (Auroville Council office, Town Hall) on Tuesday 10am - 12pm or Thursday 10am - 12pm.
3. Go to Solar Kitchen on Sunday, August 13th, 11am - 2pm.

Votes are verified by the RAS and remain strictly confidential. If you encounter any technical issue with this RAD (e.g. if you haven't received the personalized voting link), you can email [raservice@auroville.services](mailto:raservice@auroville.services).

## Hon'ble President of India to visit Auroville

Residents of Auroville have discovered through [an article](#) published in The Hindu on 28th July that the Hon'ble President of India, Ms. Droupadi Murmu, is scheduled to visit Auroville on 8th August. No information has been communicated as of yet by the AVFO or their appointees on the program of this visit. Recently, Shri Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment of India, also visited Auroville without any information shared with the residents. [Large signs](#) were displayed in Auroville for the occasion.

## Animal shelter faced imminent destruction to make way for VIP road

On Saturday 29th July, executives of the Auroville Dog Shelter, which houses over 300 dogs, encountered a team of workers marking a proposed 'VIP access road' through the dog shelter. They were informed "to immediately vacate half of [the] enclosures of the shelter as they will be destroyed immediately." [An email](#) signed by an unidentified 'Special Officer' one hour prior stated that "this work is undertaken in connection with the visit of the Hon'ble President of India".

The immediate demolition of the structures without rehousing options for the dogs would mean that many dogs bearing contagious diseases (including rabies, CD and Parvovirus) would be released into the public. The Dog Shelter team contacted their network of shelters and animal NGOs to draw attention to the issue via social media. In [an email to the Secretary, AVFO](#), the team outlined the situation and noted that "In case you decide to violently destroy the dog shelter the entire team of the Auroville Dog Shelter has no other option than to resign as we cannot take responsibility for the unfolding disaster in the making."

In [an update to the community](#), the Dog Shelter team noted that on the same day, they met with the Secretary and found a temporary solution to redirect the road so that no infrastructure of the shelter would be destroyed in the coming weeks. It is unclear whether funds will be allocated to move the Dog Shelter completely, as the road will still run through the compound. Furthermore, the proposed 'VIP access road' is also planned to pass through Siddhartha Farm and Buddha Garden and it is unclear as of now how these two Auroville farms would be impacted by this new road.

## Ayarpadi Farm takeover

Moorthy, who farms in the Ayarpadi Farm next to Windarra, was sent [an email by the AVFO 'FAMC' and their newly constituted "Farm Service"](#) informing him that he was to give up a plot of 5 acres of cultivated land. Their stated intention was to re-allocate the land to the volunteers who have been given farming training in the Unity Farm project (of Jothi Prasad of the AVFO 'ATDC) for the last 6 months. The unilateral imposition was met with resistance by the Farm Group, who outlined their reasoning in an open letter. They noted the following:

- The land in question is an integral part of a functioning farm - it cannot simply be taken out of the rest of the ecosystem that keeps the farm running.
- The land has been consistently producing field crops such as paddy, peanuts, ragi, and sesame, which “are all in short supply in Auroville and need skill to produce.” The plot in question produces about 4 tons of grain yearly.
- The 6-month training has only given an introduction to agriculture, as it is a skilled profession. The Farm Group questions why the volunteers are not asked to join an existing farm to learn the ropes before being allocated valuable, productive farmland.
- They also question how land can be taken from a farmer without any dialogue and discussion, when Moorthy has put so much energy and time in setting up the infrastructure of the farm to make this land productive.
- Finally, they note that “There are many land plots (5-6 acres in Rajapudupakkam, 17 acres in Irumbai) in Auroville which need protection and can be made productive”, and suggest allocating that land to the volunteers.

You can read the Farm Group's [full response here](#).

## **AVFO plans to restructure Auroville Schools**

[Notes from a meeting](#) held by SAIER at the end of May 2023 show that the AVFO 'FAMC' plan to reduce the budget given by BCC to Auroville schools and therefore reduce the number of employed teachers while at the same time look for ways to increase pupil numbers by opening up the Auroville schools to 'outside Auroville', presumably paying non-residents. The proposals include reducing the number of schools in Auroville overall so that there would be only one kindergarten, one middle school and one high school. Currently, there are 8 schools in Auroville, which offer a variety of approaches to integral education with different teaching styles and educational experiences suited to the varied needs of children.

Since the start of the new term in July 2023, a 6am collective yoga session for Auroville school children has been taking place at the Matrimandir, at the [suggestion of the Secretary](#). Some schools have organised class sleepovers on their campus in order to make the yoga session on time as buses were not arranged for the students, nor plans made for the hour between the end of the yoga and the start of school.

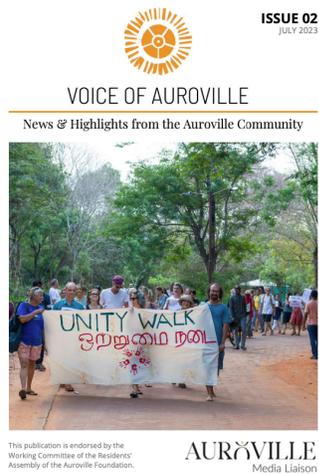
Two meetings were recently organised by the new SAIER board and the Secretary to "engage in a dialogue" with parents and teachers on the topic of education. The meetings took place at Sri Aurobindo Auditorium. A panel consisting of Margarita (AVFO 'FAMC'), Sanjeev (SAIER), Ashok C. (SAIER) and the Secretary sat on stage while residents took turns speaking their thoughts into two microphones on either side of the audience without much dialogue. Many parents and teachers expressed praise for the current education system in Auroville and the need to retain flexibility, joy and freedom in learning. Concerns were also raised regarding the proposed new direction of possible top-down imposition of restrictive systems in schools.

## **New appointment to AVFO**

A [notice](#) was posted on several websites informing that Mrs K Swarnambika, IPS, had been appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs at a "DS/Director level" at the AVFO. Mrs K Swarnambika being an Indian Police Service officer, it is still unclear what her role and function in Auroville will be. No information was shared with the Auroville residents. Mrs K Swarnambika was previously posted in the government of Nagaland, a state in which the Chairman Shri R.N. Ravi was holding functions before his nomination as Governor of Tamil Nadu.

## **Other Updates and Information**

## Voice of Auroville Issue #2



The second issue of 'Voice of Auroville', a bimonthly journal to inform about the unfolding situation in Auroville, has just been released. Articles include an update on recent events, history of the Darkali forest park, reflections on Auroville's organisation, extracts from the recently published 'Spirit of Auroville' and short presentations of a few Auroville services.

You can [find the Voice or Auroville #2 here](#).

## Meeting of Tamil community

A meeting was recently called by Tamil Aurovilians who have been working closely with the Secretary, with a purpose to unite Tamil people involved in Auroville. Reportedly, the meeting was attended by about 120 individuals, including non-Aurovilians. One of the organisers who is also a member of the AVFO 'FAMC' visited several shops of the Visitors' Center, requesting employees to attend. In the meeting, a pre-prepared questionnaire was shared with those present, asking them to highlight "positives" and "negatives" of the last 50 years. No information has been given as to how the data will be processed and used.

## Update on visa issues - numbers

In a recent community meeting, a member of the RA WCom gave the following numbers in terms of visa issues experienced by residents of Auroville:

- 10 individuals have not been given a letter of recommendation and are waiting within India without a visa. Some of these letters have been pending for more than a year. These individuals include RA Working Group members.
- 8 residents are 'in exile', meaning that they are outside of the country and are not receiving their letter of recommendation. This includes a family of 4 where letters are withheld from the children, meaning that the letters given to the parents are essentially useless as they cannot leave their children (both under 5) behind.
- 80 people have received a letter of recommendation for 1 year instead of 5. Many of these letters have been marked with the notice that the person has been "obstructing the work progress as per the Master Plan." Recently this has included Frederick, one of the first Aurovilians who met the Mother and has lived continuously in Auroville since 1968.

The RA WCom continues to do its best to support those who are affected by visa issues. If you or someone in your surroundings need support with this topic, you can write to [workingcom@auroville.services](mailto:workingcom@auroville.services).

## **Satprem appeal letter - update**

Last month, concerned residents wrote a letter of appeal to relevant ministries regarding the case of Satprem Maïni of the Auroville Earth Institute, who was given an Exit Visa due to his many reports on the Crown Road questioning the quality of the work being done. The letter was open for signing for 23 days and signed by 2,842 people, 931 of whom are Auroville residents. Satprem awaits news from higher authorities.

## **Inspiring words**

The RA WCom has shared [a massbulletin](#) in which they reaffirm their dedication to serve in their role and exhort the community to continue to stay present and active for building Mother's dream:

*“So here is our request to all: let us remain faithful, despite the waves of despair and anguish that come our way. Let us remain active and courageous, for what is really asked from us in these times of uncertainty is to fully embody the ideals for which we have dedicated our lives, the values and ideals of Auroville, so that they may continue to be manifested upon Earth. [...] Let us keep praying, let us keep acting. This is also our Karma yoga.”*

Another document in circulation is [a statement by Satprem](#), one of Mother's closest disciples, who supported the Auroville community in its time of struggle with the Sri Aurobindo Society in the 70s. The document, from March 1977, rings true for the current situation and reminds us that all is a play of the Divine, showing in a touching way the deeper, hopeful dimension of the present crisis. Satprem ends the statement by noting that:

*“Tell yourself, understand that everything is the way to Auroville, and that even if you're chased out of Auroville, you're still on the way to Auroville [...] because no one can triumph against this living Truth, it's the only Reality among phantoms. Everything is the way to Auroville. This is the hour of the Way. You can't cheat it: you have to BE the Way. You have to let the mantra beat and beat in your heart. You have to call Mother and Mother. You have to be naked and true. You have to find that which is the very Power of the New World. Then all the ghosts will fall away. This is the very meaning of Auroville.”*

## Errata from Bulletin #66

In the last bulletin (#66) it was communicated that the BCC was calling for support to cover the Maintenances of an additional 44 foresters. The BCC has clarified that they are not fundraising on behalf of the Forest or Farm Groups. These groups are to be contacted directly by those who wish to offer support - you can reach out to [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com) to be redirected to the appropriate channels.

## Changing the Narrative

In June 2023, the RA WCom shared [via massbulletin](#) their [response](#) to the AVFO ‘WCom’ [Annual Report](#) August 2021 - August 2022. The report contained a number of often-repeated narratives that have been spread by the supporters of the AVFO to justify the ongoing takeover of Auroville’s assets. As the RA WCom notes “With the benefit of nearly 12 months of hindsight since the end date of this report, it is clear that many of these erroneous statements do not reflect the reality of the situation, however, we still continue to hear many of these narratives being repeated.” The response attempted to correct the numerous errors in the report, the most common of which will be shared in upcoming editions of the Bulletin.

The original statements from the AVFO ‘WCom’ are presented in italics, followed by the RA WCom responses.

***‘Auroville must be completed quickly’***

*“Last February 2022 marked the 54th birthday of Auroville. Almost half a century later, many sporadic developments dotted the landscape here and there, but there was no city infrastructure yet. On a city scale development, there was too little and above all, an insufficient direction and focus towards a city hampered the needed development. Mother, who created Auroville as a laboratory for the development of consciousness, was in a hurry. She conveyed to those who were directly involved in the development of Auroville that Matrimandir (including the gardens) and the City should be built within a limited period to host 50.000 inhabitants, a critical number for the experiment to be attempted and necessary for an urban structure where things could play out and the evolutionary problems of a collective effort and ideal be studied as a basis of the harmony to be realized. 5 years she had in mind to complete the project, but then she consented to 10 years..”*

“The topic of town-planning in Auroville has always been a complex one, and summarizing it to “an insufficient direction and focus towards a city” doesn’t honor the realities at play. Considering its financial and human resources, Auroville has achieved an impressive amount of development over the past decade. More importantly, the spirit of experimentation and the principles of sustainable living have been at the core of most developments within Auroville, leading with example towards the change the earth needs. Regarding Mother’s words, She has always been very flexible in the instructions she gave about Auroville in general. As such, here are some of the quotes that are not being taken into account in the current misguided narrative:

*“I know that Auroville will be. It may be in 100 years, it may be in 1000 years.”*

*(The Mother, 21/09/1966)*

*“It will take a long time. Sri Aurobindo says 300 years. I am learning that impatience is no way. In 300 years Auroville will be a very nice place.”*

*(The Mother, 31/10/1968)*

*“In Auroville I do not want many men. I want some people, but true people.”*

*(The Mother, 01/10/1972)*

*“There is no need to build another ordinary city in Auroville; already there are so many. If people are like that, it will become an ordinary city and our money and efforts will be wasted.”*

*(The Mother, 08/01/1973)*

The Mother's ideas cannot be fixed to a number and a time-frame. She describes Auroville as a new kind of adventure. Our goodwill, and our efforts towards collaboration and synthesis are essential for this. We believe that the process in which Auroville develops is as important as the results. Following the ideals of Integral Yoga are invaluable to the development of Auroville; if development is violent, forced, and done without community process then it is opposed to the growth and success of Auroville."

To read more find the [full document here](#).

## Media & Other Links

- Watch [a video](#) by the RAD petitioners' representatives on how to vote and why

## 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 [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@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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