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## **Auroville Bulletin 68**

### **Tree cutting in the Matrimandir area, 15th August celebrations, Dreamcatching restarts**

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Thursday, 23rd 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**

- **Assist with the documentation of tree-cutting:** Instances of tree-cutting are happening every week across Auroville. It is important to document where and when this is happening; If you are available and willing to help with documentation, please get in touch with [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com).
- **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

### Matrimandir tree removal

The RA TDC [shared a report](#) on the recent Matrimandir (MM) excavation and tree cutting. Despite the test phase of the MM lake still being incomplete, MM executives are quickly moving forward with a second segment of the lake. This means that “various factors such as the viability and impact the lake is likely to have on the environment and ecology” remain unclear. The report shows that the excavation for the second phase is taking place over approximately 4 acres of land and endangers around 125 trees including “a large number of very old Neem trees”. Pictures included in the report show that the excavation has already removed numerous trees and many more are at risk.

These actions, the report states, go against the NGT judgement as well as straying from the recent practice whereby “the [Matrimandir] gardens have been designed through collaborative community participation”.

Narad, who was entrusted by the Mother with the task of building the MM gardens, recently resigned from his work in the MM gardens due to the planned removal of Neem Trees, and the conduct of the MM executives team. He [shared a testimony](#) stating “My dear friend and coworker told me that [a MM executive] had said that they will dig out the very old 50 to 60 year old Neem trees that truly have a presence in them and that [they] and the other executives will tell Aurovilians that they tried to transplant the trees but they died (...) I cannot accept this falsehood and therefore have resigned.”

## 15th August celebrations

On 15th August 2023, for Sri Aurobindo's 151st birth anniversary, a day-long program of events was held in Auroville. This included the usual dawn fire at Matrimandir Amphitheater, which was less attended than usual according to testimonies and [a video posted by Manohar](#).

The AVFO and affiliated groups organised several events to mark both India's independence as well as Sri Aurobindo's birthday. Spiritual leader Sri M was invited to hold [a morning meditation at the Town Hall](#) and later participated in [a 'Unity walk' along the Crown](#). An event was also held at Bharat Nivas to celebrate India's Independence day, and the Indian flag was displayed on a [recently installed](#) flagpole in front of Town Hall.

In the afternoon of the 15th, several events were organised by community members with the help of volunteers. Community activities and children's activities - such as storytelling and crafts - were offered as well as the premiers of the first part of Olivier Barot's new movie, [Sri Aurobindo & the Earth's Future](#). Later, the community gathered near the Inuksuk in the International Zone, around a 10 meter-wide flower mandala of Sri Aurobindo's symbol with candles lit by children. In the evening there was a bonfire, readings of Sri Aurobindo's words in English and Tamil, live music and a light dinner. The afternoon and evening community event was attended by approximately 700 residents.

## Legal update

**Abri/Ami/Evergreen case against PKS - Tindivanam/Madras High Court** - An interim injunction stated that PKS should not prevent Auroville from accessing the property. PKS appealed to the Madras High Court and the matter was adjourned until September.

**Quo Warranto - Madras High Court** - The case regarding the legitimacy of the AVFO 'WCom' came up for hearing on 2nd August. The legal representatives of the Secretary served a perjury petition against one RA WCom member, claiming this member was lying in court. The matter stands adjourned for 3 weeks.

**AVFO appeal against 12th August 2022 judgment in favour of the Residents' Assembly - Madras High Court** - On 12th August last year, the case regarding the legitimacy of the RA working groups was judged in favour of the RA. Soon after, on 26th August, the AVFO appealed the case, and obtained a temporary stay on the judgement pending the outcome of the appeal. For the past one year, the appeal of the case was adjourned several times and was finally heard at length on 3rd August 2023. The case was listed for Wednesday 16th of August, but was adjourned again until 24th August. In their [massbulletin dated](#) 4th August, the RA WCom notes that "[...] we are requesting that this stay should be revoked ... This is an important case since it concerns the recognition of the Working Committee, the TDC and internal organisation and governance structures."

**Appeal of AVFO against NGT decision - Supreme Court** - There is no date presently listed for NGT appeal in the Supreme Court.

**Office Order petition - Madras High Court** - The case challenging the Office Order assigning new executives to various services, such as Visitor's Centre and the Security Team, was dismissed on 11th August. It is not yet clear why as the official court order has not yet been released. You can read [the RA WCom massbulletin on this case here](#).

You can find the massbulletins of the RA WCom with more extensive legal updates here:

- [Massbulletin 3rd August](#)
- [Massbulletin 4th August](#)
- [Massbulletin 13th August](#)
- [Massbulletin 17th August](#)

## Dreamcatching restarts

The Dreamweavers Core Team held a community meeting on Saturday 29th July 2023. You can watch [the recording of the meeting here](#). They are restarting Dreamcatching sessions “to explore a more unifying action-oriented planning process for the development of Auroville.” Dreamcatching is a form of collective imagining that actively seeks to allow creativity to flow from a higher space. The sessions will be from 6-8am on Mondays. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to [dreamcatchingav@gmail.com](mailto:dreamcatchingav@gmail.com). You can read [the full announcement of the Dreamweavers here](#).

## Outcome of two recent RADs

On 14th August, the RAS [announced](#) the results of the two recent RADs. The first RAD aimed at providing the Residents' Assembly with powers to call for emergency RADs, upon the request of 300 residents (read the full proposal [here](#)). 409 residents participated in this vote, and the proposal was approved by 402 voters (98%).

The second RAD aimed at granting the RA WCom with emergency powers to appoint interim members to other working groups (read the full proposal [here](#)). 405 residents participated in this vote, and the proposal was approved by 376 voters (93%).

On 21st August, the RA WCom sent a [massbulletin](#) in which they clarified that they “equate the term 'Emergency Functions' at this time to be 'Crisis Management Functions', even if there is no specific emergency at any given moment”. They also mentioned that they “are in the process of reaching out to people about being appointed as interim members of the RA FAMC”, which has been functioning with limited membership over the past months. “The time frame of these interim appointments could be anywhere from 2 or 3 months (till the next selection process tentatively planned for end of Sept.) to 18 months, as specified in the RAD proposal.” They added: “However, we would like to make it clear that these interim appointments are not intended to replace or reduce the importance of the Selection Process and the role of the Residents' Assembly as a whole in selecting members for its working groups. The function of the RA Working Committee appointing people to working groups will be used as a stop gap measure only. (...) When the next Selection Process is announced by the Auroville Council and RAS, we urge residents to come forward and offer their time and energy as members of working groups”.

## Other Updates and Information

## Visit of the Hon'ble President of India

The Hon'ble President of India, Ms. Droupadi Murmu, visited Auroville on 8th August 2023. The program of the visit was shared on 3rd August by the AVFO 'WCom'. Access passes were required to attend the Hon'ble Presidents' speech at the Bharat Nivas Auditorium. On 7th August at 22:16pm, an [email](#) was sent at very short notice to all those who had registered, asking them to pick up their passes before midnight the same day, which made it impossible for some to attend the event.

The Hon'ble President gave [a speech](#) to Aurovilians and those present, preceded by India's national anthem and the Tamil Thai Valthu (the state song of Tamil Nadu). Among other elements, the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, expressed gratitude for the teachings and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, emphasizing their impact on seekers worldwide.

Part of the programme also included a visit by the President to the Matrimandir and its gardens, and for the occasion she was invited to plant a tree in the Matrimandir gardens, next to the amphitheater, accompanied by a [signboard](#). It is the first time a public personality's name is officially displayed within Matrimandir premises for a long-lasting homage.

## Circular from Mrs K Swarnambika

On 28th July 2023, a [notice](#) was posted on several websites announcing that Mrs K Swarnambika, IPS, had been appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs at a "DS/Director level" at the AVFO. No information has been shared by the AVFO as to the nature of Mrs Swarnambika's new role. On 11th August 2023, just prior to the 15th August birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo and the Indian Independence day, a [circular](#) from Mrs Swarnambika was sent to the community via the AVFO massbulletin service. The notice gave Aurovilians an 'action plan' to celebrate Independence Day - hoisting the National flag, sharing selfies with the flag and changing their profile pictures on social media to include it. Information was also given about a program of events hosted by the AVFO 'WCom' at Bharat Nivas. (See above paragraph on 15th August celebrations).

## Auroville News Podcast & Auroville.Media website

The Auroville Media Liaison Service (AMLS), an activity approved by the RA WCom, [announced](#) the launch of a new audio series called “Auroville News Podcast” on 6th August. The first episode of this podcast series, which delves into the latest happenings in Auroville, is available on [this webpage](#) as well as on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), and [YouTube](#).

Additionally, on 14th August, AMLS [announced](#) that their website [www.auroville.media](http://www.auroville.media) had been updated and refreshed. They highlighted their [Summary of the current crisis](#) webpage, and encouraged residents to share it with their friends and contacts, in India and world-wide. They also added that “information-sharing and media requires much work”, inviting those who feel inspired to help to write to [media@auroville.services](mailto:media@auroville.services).

## Land matters - report

A report in recent circulation claims that plots of land in Forecomers are being touted for exchange by the AVFO and their ‘Land Board’. Land on the Tindivanam Highway (Murthy’s stone carving workshop, see [Bulletin 65](#)) and in Djaima have already been exchanged. You can read the full report, which includes other information about land matters in and around Auroville, [here](#).

## Tree cutting is ongoing

Tree cutting along different sections of the Crown is ongoing despite the NGT judgement. This tree cutting, reportedly done by the AVFO ‘Land Board’ at the request of the Secretary, has over the last few days been carried out at irregular timings, e.g. on Sunday mornings or after dark. Many areas along the planned Crown (such as the area [in front of the Unity Pavilion](#), often used for parking) are slowly losing their shade. According to [an RA TDC report](#), dated 18th August, these are “severe violations of the NGT judgement” which included protected trees such as palmyras. This ‘work’, being done in contradiction to both the NGT judgement and the RA decision to pause development on the Crown, is being carefully documented by a group of residents, who have recently indicated that they need help. **If you are available and willing to help with documentation, please get in touch with [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com).**

## Tourist/VIP Access Road

Auroville farmers [shared](#) an “expression of concern” with the AVFO ‘FAMC’, ‘Farm Service’ and the Secretary, regarding the planned relocation of 3 Auroville farms in order to accommodate a new VIP access road. An [image](#) shared recently shows that the proposed road would go straight through Buddha Garden, Shambala & Siddhartha Farms. The road, the additional parking lot and convenience facilities that are planned would, according to the farmers’ statement, “obliterate” the 3 farms.

The farmers’ expressed that “This will certainly be a loss for Auroville's agricultural sustainability and productivity ... [this] appears to us to be in direct contradiction to other statements you have made about wanting to increase agricultural production in Auroville”. The statement emphasised that the farmers’ group did not intend to oppose the plan, but that they urge a proper plan in place for the relocation of the 3 farms prior to the road being built - identifying viable land with access and providing sufficient funds for relocation, for facilities such as accommodation, borewells and storerooms.

A letter from the RA TDC to the Special Officer of the AVFO ‘Land Board’ raised several points regarding the proposed Tourist/VIP access road. They pointed out that this road is not in any version of the gazetted Master Plan that the Secretary claims to be following in order to build the City, and that any road construction would go against the NGT verdict. You can read their full letter [here](#).

In recent weeks, the Auroville Dog Shelter received notice that part of the Dog Shelter would also be destroyed to make way for this road. The action was narrowly prevented after the intervention of the Dog Shelter team who appealed strongly to outside agencies. Please see [Bulletin 67](#) for more details.

## **Update on Kalabhumi borewell**

At the beginning of July 2023, the CPWD surveyor and supervisor visited Kalabhumi and discussed the trajectory of the road with a resident. As per their measurements, the road and channel are actually located 20-30 centimetres away from the borewell, and therefore it could be spared, as long as the work is executed with care and caution.

On July 28th 2023, allegedly upon the request of the Crown Road contractor SP&Co, a JCB was sent to Kalabhumi again, where they continued digging and broke the pipe. After breaking it, they continued digging towards the borewell, stopping around one metre before the well. In the meantime a group of Aurovilians gathered and prevented further destruction. When the JCB left, as water services were not replying to requests for help repairing the pipe, the residents went to get equipment to fix the broken pipe themselves, enabling a temporary connection of the borewell to the Kalabhumi water tank.

On August 2nd, two CPWD site supervisors met with a Kalabhumi resident and discussed possible non-destructive solutions. They stated that the borewell would remain untouched and appeared to understand that it would be easier for them to lay an infrastructure channel under the road to allow the Kalabhumi pipeline and cables to reach the community side. They said that they would take this information back to the AVFO, after which they would work on plans and revert back to the Kalabhumi community. No news has been received since then, and for the moment it appears that the threat to the borewell has been averted.

## Media & Other Links

- Auroville Media Liaison - [Summary of the current crisis](#)
- Auroville Media Liaison - [Responses from a Resilient Community](#)
- Olivier Barot - [Sri Aurobindo and the Earth's Future](#) (movie)
- 'Culture Unplugged' film festival is screening the film about Auroville's Forests 'Ever Slow Green' between now and October. Please follow this [link](#) for another opportunity to watch the film

## About us

We are a group of Aurovillians 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://auroville.media/> contains a great deal of information on the current situation.

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](mailto: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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