

View this email in your browser



Auroville Bulletin 74

Forest workers gratuity unpaid, RAD Result, Satprem leaves India

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Tuesday, 7th November 2023

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.
- **MM Neem Tree Vigil:** Residents have taken up a vigil to protect one of the old neem trees in danger of being cut to make way for the Matrimandir Lake. If you are willing to assist them in keeping their watch, please reach out to 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. If you wish to support the Farm or Forest Group as a whole, please contact us at 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. 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, 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 4:30-6:00 pm.

Urgent Topics

Forest workers gratuity still unpaid by AVFO ‘BCC’

In June 2023, Chandresh and Torkil of the AVFO 'FAMC' [cut all budgets](#) and maintenances for the Forest Group. This left 40 Aurovilians without a maintenance from one day to the next and 60 plus local forest workers without pay, many of whom have been working with Auroville for years, some for decades. Effectively, they were fired en-masse by the AVFO 'FAMC' from one day to the next.

In India, there is a legal obligation to pay 'gratuity' after employment is terminated, which corresponds to a portion of salary for each year of employment. While gratuity was, until recently, always paid by the BCC through a dedicated account, the AVFO groups have since decided that it is up to the individual employer or unit to provide gratuity. This has created an untenable situation for foresters, who had not foreseen the need to set aside money for this purpose. They are now suddenly expected by the AVFO 'BCC' to come up with a large sum for these gratuities while their own maintenance is also cut. In an update, the Forest Group noted that "Continued non-payment of gratuity by the GB-appointed BCC is untenable legally and morally... the forest group asked the GB BCC and FAMC (including the Secretary of the AVFO) to pay the gratuity and 1 month compensatory wage to the workers. In spite of repeated reminders, this has not yet been honoured."

It appears that the AVFO 'BCC' has now decided to apply this sudden change in policy to all Auroville units (whether income generating or not) and their employees. [A recent email from SAIIER](#) to all schools outlines the change in policy and notes that "We are aware that this is quite challenging and not even possible for many units." SAIIER plans to set up and fundraise for a central account that can help schools cover the gratuity costs, though the scheme is voluntary and the responsibility for funding gratuity is mainly left with the schools. Their email also notes that due to the current situation, there is a concern that workers might be tempted to quit their jobs in hopes of getting gratuity while there is still some funding available.

Satprem has left India

Satprem Maini left India on 31st October 2023, after the Secretary rescinded her recommendation for his Auroville visa. He was subsequently given an Exit Permit by the FRRO. The day before he left, friends of Satprem organised an open house at the Auroville Earth Institute which was attended by around 200 people. This was followed by an evening at the Tibetan Pavilion, the first building in Auroville built by Satprem. Please see [here](#) for the presentation given by Satprem during the open house event. Satprem has now arrived safely in France.



RAD Result

The AVFO recently removed at least two Aurovilians, Maël of the RA WCom and Satprem of the Earth Institute, from the Register of Residents (RoR), after they were asked to leave India. Ayyappan from the Earth Institute also had his name removed for not updating his RoR details, according to an email signed jointly by the AVFO 'WCom' and the AVFO 'FAMC'. As a result, the Residents' Assembly recently voted on a [resolution](#) questioning the AVFO's authority to remove people from the RoR. This RA Decision has yielded the following results:

Total number of valid votes: 741.

98% participants voted in favour of the above resolution.

0.81% participants rejected it.

1.3% participants didn't know.

The number of valid votes represents about one third of the adult population of Auroville, which is thrice the required quorum. As such, the resolution was approved. This vote was considered necessary by the RA WCom, who called for this emergency RAD, as the Auroville Foundation Act reserves the right to determine who is and who is not an Aurovillian solely to the Residents' Assembly.

5th Tamil Nadu Young Thinkers Meet hosted in Savitri Bhavan

The 5th Tamil Nadu Young Thinkers Meet was organised between 3rd and 5th November in Auroville's Savitri Bhavan. The community was not informed of this closed event.

According to [the program](#) of the meeting, speakers from Auroville included the Secretary, Dr Jayanti Ravi; the recently appointed Deputy Secretary, Smt K Swarnambika; and Dr Mollika Ganguly, a recently appointed staff member of the AVFO. Other notable speakers included a spiritual teacher, Swami Mitrananda, as well as active political figures, such as the Chief Minister of Puducherry, Thiru N Rangaswamy. According to testimonies, about 50 young people from [ABVP](#) (a student organisation affiliated with the RSS) attended the meeting. Reportedly, some of these attendees were hosted in Atithi Griha guesthouse. The program included a visit to AuroOrchard, one of Auroville's largest farms, attended by many participants.

Other Updates and Information

A new website for Stand For Auroville Unity

Stand For Auroville Unity, the community-aligned campaign that was launched in December 2021 after the forceful events at the Youth Center, Bliss Forest and Darkali, had faced technical issues with its website over the last few months. On 31st October, the Stand For Auroville Unity team published a new website containing information about the current situation, as well as useful resources to understand the crisis. You can access the new website here: <https://standforauroville.org/>

Auroville redefined by AVFO in Letters of Recommendation

The AVFO recently changed the wording on visa Letters of Recommendation (LoR). The previous wording stated that “Auroville was founded by ‘The Mother’ of Sri Aurobindo Ashram on 28th February 1968” [see picture here]. Now, it reads that Auroville is “functioning under the administrative control of the Ministry of Education, Government of India” [see picture here]. This fails to acknowledge that the Auroville Foundation is an autonomous body, which functions under three statutory bodies (the Residents’ Assembly, the Governing Board and the International Advisory Council) as per the Auroville Foundation Act. Mentions of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have also been removed.

MM Lake update

New aerial images show the extent of the tree cutting at the Matrimandir (MM) to make way for the second phase of the MM lake. This tree cutting is in direct contravention of the April 2022 verdict of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The verdict stated that proper township planning, in the form of Environmental Clearance and Detailed Development Plans, should be in place before any further construction. Although the AVFO appealed the verdict to the Supreme Court, no stay was put on the verdict by the court, and therefore the verdict still stands.



Recently, several *Atalantia* trees were uprooted in the MM gardens, to be transplanted elsewhere. The root ball that was left on the transplanted trees was far smaller than the recommended standard, usually 8-10 times the stem diameter. *Atalantias* are a slow-growing species with an unusual bark pattern. They are native to the Tamil Nadu region and can live up to 300 years.



AVFO 'WCom' holds “private invitation only” meeting at Unity Pavilion

On 2nd November 2023, the AVFO 'WCom' held a closed meeting at Unity Pavilion. The invitation was sent only to selected "friends", however it circulated widely. Other Aurovilians who were interested in attending were turned away at the door. The invitation indicated the reason for the meeting as follows: "in the recent months, people have become confused by some of the stories and fears that have been spread ... we want to take the opportunity to hear your views and questions and try to answer them as best we can."

Around 20 attended the meeting. Topics reportedly discussed were the 'problem of democracy', the 'problem' of the Residents' Assembly, housing issues, the Prosperity proposal, and the issues with implementing the Crown Road, such as missing plots of land on the planned Crown road, that have not yet been bought and are causing delays in construction.

Changing the narrative

In June 2023, the RA WCom shared their [response](#) to the AVFO 'WCom' [Annual Report August 2021 - August 2022](#) via [massbulletin](#). The report contained a number of often-repeated narratives that continue to be 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 addressed numerous errors in the AVFO 'WCom' annual 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.

The Galaxy concept is not the same as a city plan

"Auroville was founded on 28th February, 1968 on a wind-swept plateau with degraded hard red soil without a water source... A panel of the galaxy model, Mother's city plan worked out together with her Chief Architect Roger Anger, was on display. It was the beginning of a new era. The Adventure of Consciousness had started in Auroville."

"The AVFO appointed Working Committee continuously and wrongly confuses the "Galaxy" and Auroville's city plan. Expert town planners, architects, and Roger Anger himself have expressed that The Galaxy is an architectural concept that needs to be translated into proper plans. Calling the Galaxy a "plan" is false and is at the root of the long-standing confusion and conflict related to development. City plans should take shape through inspiration from the Galaxy concept. They should result from a truly collaborative process, as stipulated in the Perspective Plan 2025. Any attempt to translate the Galaxy model into concrete city plans have been dismissed and ignored by the AVFO appointed Working Committee due to this obstinate misunderstanding of the city planning process."

Media & Other Links

- **"If Any Exemption under the RTI Act Is Claimed, It Should Be Adequately Justified": CIC Slams the PIO of Auroville Foundation, 31st October 2023:** <https://www.moneylife.in/article/if-any-exemption-under-the-rti-act-is-claimed-it-should-be-adequately-justified-cic-slams-the-pio-of-auroville-foundation/72435.html>
- **A 900-page study on Auroville's Governance**, done by Raag Yadava and Nidhi Harihar, was recently published. You can access it [here](#).
- **New Stand For Auroville Unity website:** <https://standforauroville.org/>

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

If you wish to know more, the websites <https://auroville.media/> and <https://standforauroville.org/> contain a great deal of information on the current situation.

Please note that our previous bulletins can be found at this link: <https://linktr.ee/evolvinggalaxy>

With regard to future actions, those who have particular skills such as writing, social media, film editing etc are welcome to write to evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com. Also feel free to share with us information, questions or suggestions.

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.

You receive this email because you have joined the newsletter **Evolving Galaxy** With the address evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com.

[Unsubscribe](#) to no longer receive emails from us.