

View this email in your browser



Auroville Bulletin 82

SAIIR cuts and closures, changes in AVFO membership, update on land exchanges

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Friday, 26th July 2024

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

How can you help?

Urgent actions

- **Show physical presence and support in AuroOrchard:** Residents of AuroOrchard are currently undergoing a lot of pressure, including harassment, by the new 'owners' of the land. Show presence whenever possible, by visiting them and offering physical and emotional support. See land exchanges section below for more information.
- **Sri Ma needs help to prevent erosion:** There is a very real threat to Srirama community with the beach eroding more and more each day (see below for more information) Help is needed to put the Geo Textile in place to slow down the erosion. It's tough work but the more that come the easier it is! Please come every day between 2.30 and 6pm. Bring gloves if you have them.
- **The Dehashakti team have requested the presence of parents:** The Dehashakti team have decided to resume their sports program on Monday 29th July (please see below for more information). They have requested that parents be present on that date, and also to send any feedback regarding the takeover of Dehashakti to dehashaktisports@auroville.org.in, copying in saiier@auroville.org.in. Please also forward any emails on the matter to workingcom@auroville.services.
- **Support for Maintenances:** The funds collected to support individuals cut off from their maintenances are quickly running out and more help is needed. 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 these groups via evolvingalaxy@gmail.com

Ongoing actions

- **Assist with documenting tree-cutting and clearing:** In light of the recent Stay Order placed on the NGT verdict it is particularly important to continue with documentation of tree cutting and land clearing. If you are available and willing to help with documentation, please get in touch with evolvinggalaxy@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 AV Council room vigil:** For over 2 years the community has held a 24/7 vigil in the AV Council room in Town Hall. **More people are needed** to ensure the round-the-clock presence. Please contact avcouncil@auroville.services, WhatsApp 94430 03617 or 94437 02716 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.
- **Share information confidentially with the RA WCom via email workingcom@auroville.services.** The RA WCom is collecting information regarding the various interactions with the AVFO and their appointees. This information is necessary in order to protect the RA and will remain strictly confidential.

Editorial note

This 82nd issue covers recent news, as well as part of the highlights of Auroville events since March 2024. Other highlights from this period will be included in the next issues of the Bulletin.

What is happening now

SAIER - takeovers, cuts and closures

Budget cuts

Since the start of the 2024 financial year this April, a number of Aurovilian operations previously supported by SAIER have had their budgets cut and/or their maintenances removed. The current SAIER Board is composed of Anton, Ashoke, Aurévan, Devi, Lijun, Mahavir and Sanjeev, additionally the Secretary of the AVFO is a decision maker although not officially on the Board. Projects like Cripa, Aurofilm, Lilaloka, the Budokan, the Teacher's Center, Kalou's Circus and Sabrina's Pottery Studio were all informed that, due to a large cut in the Government grant received by SAIER, funds were no longer available to support them. In order for them to keep functioning, activities that were previously available as a free or low cost community service would now have to charge for their services at a rate that would cover their full costs. This will prohibit many Aurovilians from partaking in their usual community activities.

The Learning Community (TLC) closed down

Just a few days before the end of the semester in April 2024, The Learning Community (TLC) were informed by the SAIER executive team that their budget & maintenances were being removed from July 2024 onwards and they would no longer be able to use Base Camp, where most of their activities took place. The given reason for closure was due to low pupil numbers, and the order to vacate Base Camp was deemed necessary as it stands on the path of a future road. Despite being told by SAIER that the budget and maintenances would continue until July, they were in fact cut by the AVFO 'BCC' in June and the staff and facilitators were placed on three month bridging maintenances.

In an [email](#) sent by TLC to SAIER on 6th June 2024, TLC made several requests and clarifications to SAIER. Stating that it was "unreasonable" and possibly illegal (under the Tamil Nadu Private School Act) to order them to vacate Base Camp without proper notice, they requested a grace period of one year to remain there allowing "the community time to find an alternate location and prepare the children mentally, emotionally and physically for the move." They also clarified that their examination of the maps led them to understand that Base Camp does not lie in the path of a future radial road, and that instead of only having 7 children enrolled "A total of 15 children [are] continuing from last year ... plus 7 confirmed new admissions. In addition, there are 6-8 new families who are still in the admissions process (awaiting visas etc). In total there are 22-30 children."

SAIER later agreed for TLC to continue using Base Camp for a short transition period while they moved to new premises, and TLC recently [announced](#) that they are now operating under a different umbrella and would now be offering learning programs through the unit Kalvi.

Dehashakti sports complex

On 13th July, the Executives of Dehashakti (Michel & Saravanan) shared a [public letter](#) about sweeping changes that were being implemented at Dehashakti by the new 'Auroville Physical Education Board' (AVPEB). This board is made up of Savitri, Lijun, Nilima, Pedro, Ruben and Praveen. The changes were scheduled to take place when Dehashakti reopened for the new semester on 15th July, however no information was shared with the community about what was being put in place.

The Executives of Dehashakti shared that AVPEB had held an intensive two week learning

programme as a part of a wider [one year training course](#). This had taken place during the school holidays which meant that some of the Dehashakti teachers had not been able to attend. According to the Executives “At the middle of the program contrary to the schedule previously given, the students at the program were told that at the end of two weeks there will be an assessment- both theory and practical... we [then] received a communication from SAIER that this assessment is to be attended by all Dehashakti teachers ... and passing this assessment will be only allowing teachers at Dehashakti to continue.” All the Dehashakti teachers attended the assessment however only two were “chosen” while the others were replaced with individuals chosen by AVPEB, “of which at least 5 are non-Aurovilians.”

On 16th July, AVPEB [announced](#) the changes and introduced the new team, emphasising their qualifications. They claimed that they had been fully transparent with schools and the Dehashakti team about the course and expectations stating that “All trainees were continuously updated and reminded of the commitment that this course and its impact demanded.” The Dehashakti Executives [responded](#) on 19th July, pointing out the inconsistencies in the approach of the AVPEB: “It is a little confusing when you speak of free progress and on [the] other side ‘fail’ and ‘pass’ in an assessment” and claiming that it was “direct misinformation” that the Executives had met with the new team for preparatory activities. All of the Dehashakti team members who received maintenances (a number were volunteers) have been put on bridging maintenances from August onwards.

In a further [communication](#) sent on 25th July, the Dehashakti team stated that despite their willingness to work harmoniously with the AVPEB team, they had “realised that they [AVPEB] are not looking for a true collaboration”. They shared that at the recent School Board meeting it transpired that the AVPEB are not, in fact, formed under SAIER, nor are they endorsed by the AVFO. It is therefore unclear what authority they are acting from.

Furthermore, they stated, “At the moment there is a clear confusion of [a] one year program being a training program for the teachers while those same trainees who are just a few weeks into the program are already teaching the students ... These trainees are even given the role of class teachers creating many gaps in the functioning of Dehashakti”. In the past two weeks, some of the team have been onsite every day where they claim they have “observed a very poor attendance and many students requesting the old teachers to come back to the field.”

Given all this, the Dehashakti team has taken the decision to resume their program on Monday 29th July, stating that “We will be happy to include the new trainees along with us and mentor them, if they would like to collaborate.” They have requested the presence of parents at Dehashakti on that date to ensure that the children are not affected by the transition and to enable the parents to help monitor the activities. They have also requested that parents send their feedback on the recent actions to dehashaktisports@auroville.org.in, copying in saiier@auroville.org.in.

New developments on land exchanges

Felicity

On 5th July, the main access to Felicity community was fenced by the new landowners, leaving Felicity residents without access. According to a resident of Felicity, they now have to enter the community through a gap between a pillar and a tree, making the community inaccessible for 4-wheelers and emergency vehicles. While approaching the AVFO 'Land Board', Felicity residents were reportedly met with verbal violence; their written letters remain unreplied.

AuroOrchard

On 9th July, a resident of AuroOrchard shared [an update](#) on the situation in the farm. The update detailed ongoing challenges with the land exchange, including unfulfilled promises to replace vital infrastructure, inadequate construction of a new cow shed, and increasing harassment by Mr. T. Kannan, the new landowner. The resident reported a blocked access to work areas and their home, and a sudden pressure to relocate from one day to the next despite previous assurances. This situation further escalated on 18th July when Jasmin, a resident and farmer, found herself fenced in her house while her partner Aravinda was blocked outside. The same day, AuroOrchard residents reached out to the police and the Deputy Secretary of the AVFO for their intervention. On 19th July in the afternoon, several residents came on site to show support to AuroOrchard and the local press covered the issue ([Metro news](#), [Oscar news](#) and [Ragava vision](#)). The day ended with another attempt to reach a temporary agreement, that the fence be reopened for a duration of one month, to sort out administrative matters. However, six days later, there is still no opening in the fence, which forces Jasmin and Aravinda to reach their home by scaling the fence. Additionally, on 20th July, the drinking water supply to the entire farm was stopped due to the removal, on Mr. Kannan's land, of electric fuses for the water pump. The fuses came back three days later.

According to a [massbulletin](#) by the RA WCom on the matter, published on 25th July, "The situation remains absolutely distressing and uncertain." They added: "**We invite community members to show their support by visiting AuroOrchard.** Your presence can help demonstrate our collective concern and solidarity." The RA WCom also sent a [letter](#) to the GB and IAC on 22nd July, calling for their urgent intervention. As of yet they have received no reply.

Sri Ma

On 15th July, residents of the Sri Ma community received an "[Emergency Evacuation Notice](#)" signed by K. Swarnambika, Deputy Secretary of the AVFO, mentioning that "the sea erosion has reached a critical situation today and the buildings may collapse at any moment". The notice "advised that all the residents and establishments running in the Srima community shall be evacuated immediately so that loss to life and property is avoided". While it is true that sea erosion has affected Sri Ma [dramatically](#) over the last few months, there is mistrust in the AVFO's motives due to their many land exchanges and rumours that Sri Ma may be targeted. This has raised questions about the emergency notice, and if there are other intentions associated regarding the evacuation for safety.

Sri Ma community have requested daily assistance with laying the geotextile to help slow down the erosion. If you are able to attend please go between 2.30 & 6pm after high tide. Please bring your own gloves if possible.

Other ongoing exchanges

Earlier in June and July, unofficial reports indicated that the AVFO was planning on further exchanges in Eternity (located on the coast), Jardin de Mère (Auromodel area) and Forecomers. Surveyors were seen in some of these areas, however exchanges are yet to be confirmed.

Results from the ERAD on land exchanges

On 8th July 2024, the [results](#) of the emergency RAD initiated by the RA WCom against ongoing land exchanges deals showed that 98% (933 residents) voted in favour of the resolution to halt, review, and reverse land deals undertaken by the Secretary with the authorisation of the GB. As a total of 945 valid votes have been submitted, the number of participants has significantly exceeded the 10 per cent quorum required to validate the decision (currently 240 as of July 2024). The RA WCom will now approach the relevant authorities, seeking to review and reverse these land exchanges and ensure that future exchanges respect due processes. You can read the RAS report [here](#).

On 6th July 2024, prior to the end of the voting period, a community gathering with a potluck dinner was arranged at the Certitude Sportsground to share information about these land exchanges. People gathered around a flower mandala that visually depicted the Master Plan, including outlying communities of Auroville that are at risk of being exchanged, to give a sense of what is at stake for Auroville's physical body. About 1000 residents and friends attended this event.



Other Updates and Information

Maintenance cuts continue

The AVFO 'BCC' have continued with their program of stringent maintenance cuts. It is estimated that the number of Aurovilians who have now been affected has reached over 170. Recently, members of the AV Council and the Entry Board had their maintenances removed. AVFO 'BCC' also [requested](#) that the Financial Service stop the children's maintenances for approximately 100 families who did not fill in a [google form](#), but apparently this request was not completed in full as many continue to receive the funds.

Additionally, the AVFO 'BCC' & 'FAMC' are refusing most requests for waivers of the Auroville contribution, even to [those](#) who have had their maintenance cut and have no income whatsoever, or to [those](#) who work for the community in a voluntary capacity. Whereas in the past it was accepted that people could make a contribution to Auroville 'in kind' through their work, it now seems that only a financial contribution is recognised.

The refusal to waive the contribution particularly affects foreigners who rely on a visa, since the AVFO will not proceed with a request for a letter of recommendation until they receive a 'no dues certificate' of confirmation from the AVFO 'BCC' that confirms that there is no money owed. A number of people have been pursued by the AVFO 'BCC' for many lakhs that are deemed to be 'owed' even when there was a waiver agreed in the past.

Since April 2024 the AVFO 'BCC' has begun to release a [monthly statement](#) of Auroville's accounts, in a similar format to that which was previously used by the RA BCC. The figures show that there is partisanship in the allocation of community funds. For example, the AVFO 'RAS' (Ramanarayana & Hans), who were formed by the AVFO by an [Office Order](#) in April 2023, receive a monthly budget of 37,600 rs which includes one full maintenance. This is despite the fact the AVFO 'RAS' have never organised a single meeting and have not sent a single communication to the community since [November 2023](#). In contrast the legitimate and community-endorsed RAS have continued to work diligently despite having their budget and office removed, and their FS account emptied, by the AVFO.

Changes in AVFO appointees

Recent months have seen several changes in the composition of the AVFO and their appointed 'groups'. Here are some of these changes:

- The **Secretary** of the AVFO, Dr Jayanti Ravi, ended her three-year term on 4th July 2024. Sources indicate that her term has been extended by one additional year, but no written evidence has been published so far. Over the past weeks, letters were signed by K. Swarnambika, Deputy Secretary of the AVFO, as "Secretary-in-charge". This is likely due to the Secretary having been on leave over the summer months.
- **Governing Board:** On 19th March, Tamilisai Soundararajan, former Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry and member of the Governing Board, resigned. The new Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, [C. P. Radhakrishnan](#), seems to be replacing Tamilisai in the Governing Board as a permanent invitee.
- **AVFO 'WCom':** In recent months, two 'members' of the AVFO 'WCom', Srimoyi and Partha, have removed their names from the signature of the group's massbulletins, which could indicate their resignation; however there has been no communication with the community in this regard as would be usual practice.
- **Housing:** A new committee, called the 'Housing Committee', was constituted by the GB on 12th March. This committee comprises GB members, the AVFO Secretary, and additional staff members and officials from the AVFO. With a 'Housing Committee' exclusively composed of non-Aurovilians, the approach to housing in Auroville seems to have radically changed. Venkatesh, a resident of Auroville working for the AVFO and previously in charge of the Housing Service, has been appointed as principal of Auroville's New Era Secondary School (NESS).
- **New AVFO staff members:** The AVFO, which was until recently running with less than 10 employees, has grown into a larger administrative structure. Sources indicate that it now has about 50 employees, many of whom are active or retired government officials. Among the many questions raised by this sudden increase in AVFO membership, one concern is housing as it seems that several Auroville assets, including the homes of deceased Aurovilians and the SAIIER teachers' staff quarters, were repurposed and granted to these AVFO employees instead of Aurovilians and Newcomers on the housing wait list. There also seems to be an increasing trend in these well-paid officials demanding discounts and advantages for their friends and families when using Auroville services.
- **AVFO 'Fellowship' program:** In February 2024, the AVFO posted [on its website](#) an [advertisement](#) for an 'Auroville Fellowship' program launched with the support of the Ministry of Culture. This appears to be a series of work offers for several key positions in Auroville, such as "General Management", "Social Media", "IT", "Medicine and Health Management", and more. The advertisement also mentioned that "Auroville Foundation will provide the selected fellows - accommodation, food, and internal movement facility along with a basic stipend" - while increasing numbers of Aurovilians currently don't have access to these.

The new AVFO 'Fellowship' program and the rapid increase in AVFO staff members, who are progressively replacing Aurovilians in key positions such as land management, housing or town development, has led an Aurovilian to publish, [in the 6th June 2024 RA News & Notes](#), that "the residents of Auroville are progressively being replaced".

RA Working Groups & RAS membership

On 27th & 28th April 2024, the selection process to appoint new members to the RA WCom, AV Council and Entry Board took place. As a result of the selection process, these groups are now composed of the following members:

- **RA WCom:**
 - Ongoing members: Aravinda, Bharathy, Chali, Mael, Valli
 - New members: Matthieu, Prashant
- **AV Council:**
 - Ongoing members: Ashwini, Riju, Samrat
 - New members: Lucas, Martin, Ramesh, Sathiya
- **Entry Board:**
 - Ongoing members: Grace, Sara, Sonja
 - New members: Amy, Don, Fabienne, Mirco, Vadivel

The new, ongoing and outgoing members of RA Working Groups presented themselves at a community meeting at Kalabhumi on 30th April.

This latest selection process did not include the RA FAMC, as the RA had voted on 10th March that the RA WCom would "coordinate the functions of the FAMC until such time as the circumstances allow for the selection and functioning of a new FAMC of the RA" (see [RAD results](#)). On 8th May, the RA WCom published in a [massbulletin](#): *"We have identified a team of resource persons who are ready to actively support us in this. If you have a question, would like advice, or would like to put something on record regarding any funds and assets related matter, please write to famc@auroville.services, which will be monitored by members of the WCom. And if you have ideas and experience related to alternative economies and financial management systems, we would be happy to hear from you as well."*

On 18th June, the AV Council published a [massbulletin](#) about the RAS membership. They announced the resignation of Manas and the arrival of Peter L, the RAS team "now comprises Peter and Tatiana, with the support of resource persons as and when needed". They invited new residents to apply and join this service, which is essential to the good functioning of the RA. **If you are interested, please send an email to the Auroville Council at avcouncil@auroville.services.**

Developments with the Council Meeting room

The group of Aurovilians and other well-wishers who have been keeping vigil in the Town Hall AV Council room, recently marked two full years of continuous presence in the space. Since the 2nd July 2022, when the AVFO 'ACUR management team' sent its first email to the AV Council ordering them to vacate the room immediately, a team of dedicated community members have kept a 24 hour presence, therefore keeping the space available for working groups and residents. People are always needed to assist, if you would like to help please contact avcouncil@auroville.services or WhatsApp 94430 03617 to sign up. See [here](#) for more information.

The most recent attempt to retake the space for the AVFO 'working groups' took place on 11th March 2024. A [notice to vacate](#) was sent to several (at that time) current and former AV Council members, ordering them to vacate the premises by 15th March 2024, threatening that "strict action will be taken against such violators and unauthorised users". The RA WCom responded via a [massbulletin](#) on 15th March, reaffirming that "this room has always been utilised by groups selected by the Residents' Assembly and this will continue".

Miscellaneous news

- **House allocated to an AVFO employee in Swayam community:** In June, the house of the late Shakuntala in Swayam community was allocated to Mollika Ganguly, non-Aurovilian and project coordinator at the AVFO. This allocation was done by the new AVFO 'Housing Committee' and it is unclear whether this was done pro-bono. Swayam community members were not consulted in this decision.
- **New AVFO 'Help Desk' in Solar Kitchen:** On 10th May, the AVFO published a [notice](#) announcing that a "help desk has been set up at Solar Kitchen... to sort out the issues pending with the different wings of the Auroville Foundation, other matters in Government and any other grievances". The help desk would be attended by officers from the AVFO, and members of the AVFO 'WCom', 'ATDC' and 'FAMC'. It would be open, the notice said, every weekday between 12 noon and 1.30 pm. However, on many occasions since its launch, the help desk has been reported empty at the indicated timings.
- **AVFO 'Media Interface' produces inaccurate statements:** On 14th April, 'Media Interface' [posted](#) on Facebook that Pondicherry University students had recently "completed a 21-day internship" in the Auroville Earth Institute (AVEI). AVEI [responded](#), indicating that "while students dropped in for a brief campus tour of about 30 mins, there hasn't been any involvement in internships at AVEI". They also reported several other discrepancies in the post by 'Media Interface'.

Media & Other Links

- 30th January 2024, [Statement on Auroville's current situation](#) written by two IAC members and endorsed by eight international personalities
- 31st March 2024, RA News&Notes 1021: [A financial year balance for Auroville](#) by Jasmin
- 6th June 2024, RA News&Notes 1030: [Auroville in Crisis: A Call to Resistance and Resilience](#) by Aurorrific
- 6th June 2024, RA News&Notes 1030: [Strengthening the Auroville they cannot touch](#) by Jasmin
- 27th June 2024, RA News&Notes 1033: [An Urgent Appeal to Every One of Us](#) by an Aurovilian
- 4th July 2024, RA News&Notes 1034: [Wake Up, Auroville!](#) by A Guardian of the True Galaxy
- 20th July 2024, video clips in Tamil covering the situation in AuroOrchard were released by [Metro news](#), [Oscar news](#) and [Ragava vision](#).

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.