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## **Auroville Bulletin 87**

### **Jayanti Ravi re-appointed as Secretary, Road Construction Update**

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Wednesday, 15th January 2025

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

## **How can you help?**

### **Urgent actions**

- **Support the RA News and Notes:** The RA News and Notes needs financial support to continue functioning. If you can, please consider making a donation to Financial Service account number #252150. To read all issues and subscribe, [click here](#).
- **Support for Maintenances:** Funds are needed to support individuals cut off from their maintenances by the AVFO working groups. 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 these groups via [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com).

## Ongoing actions

- **Assist with documenting tree-cutting and clearing:** In light of the 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](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com).
- **Financial support for legal fees:** If you can donate towards legal and delegation fees, please email [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com). Please see [here](#) for more information about why further financial assistance is necessary.
- **Help with the AVC room vigil:** For over 2 years 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.
- **Share information confidentially with the RA WCom via email [workingcom@auroville.services](mailto: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.

# What is happening now

## Errata & MM lake breakage update

In Bulletin 86 a rebuttal to the Matrimandir Lake incident report did not contain the link to the rebuttal, or the original report from the MM Lake Team. Both documents can be found in [this email](#).

Jan Imhoff also shared a [detailed report](#) giving his opinion on why the MM wall broke apart during the cyclone. Jan was previously chief engineer of the test lake and channel but he resigned when the current MM Lake Team decided to go ahead with the second phase of the lake before the test lake was completed.

Recently, in order to speed up the work after the MM lake wall breakage, the MM team have begun releasing large amounts of water from the lake, allowing it to flow down the road next to Town Hall towards Citadine. Several residents reported seeing 'a river' of water flowing away from the MM area. It seems the lake water is being wasted instead of directed into the canyons or existing rainwater collection areas near MM to recharge the aquifer.



## Dr. Jayanti Ravi's return confirmed

After several months of speculation since her [repatriation](#) to Gujarat in August 2024, it has been [confirmed](#) that Dr Jayanti Ravi has been given a dual role, as both Secretary of the Auroville Foundation and the Revenue Secretary of Gujarat State. It is highly unusual for a person to hold roles at both State and Central levels.

The notice indicates that her latest tenure is for one year, or until a new Secretary is appointed, whichever comes soonest. The notice is dated 20th December 2024, meaning that she was not the Secretary in the period August-December, despite multiple [press reports](#) and [claims](#) from AVFO allies stating that she was.

## **‘HRS’ formed by AVFO ‘FAMC’**

In November 2024, a [Standing Order](#) regarding residence criteria was announced by the AVFO, laying out a stringent ‘Code of Conduct’ to severely restrict the activities of Auroville’s residents, under the threat of ‘termination of status’.

The AVFO ‘FAMC’ shared an [announcement](#) that they had “established a sub-department, the “Human Resources Service” (HRS), to manage all matters related to the Residents of Auroville. The team consists of Antim, Joel, Muriel, Raja, Sindhuja, and Suresh”.

The inclusion of Sindhuja means that she now has five, or possibly six, roles under the AVFO - [Member of AVFO ‘ATDC’](#), ‘AVFO Town Planning Group Incharge/Coordinator’(in her own words), ‘[AVFO Legal Coordinator](#)’, ‘[AVFO Media Vetter](#)’, and [AVFO ‘HRS’ member](#). She has also put herself forward to be a member of the [AVFO ‘Admission & Termination Committee’](#) and in December 2021 she was appointed one of the AVFO’s ‘[Official Spokespersons](#)’.

A later [announcement](#) from the new ‘HRS’ team outlined their numerous roles and responsibilities including: giving permission to Aurovilians leaving Auroville for more than two weeks, giving permission to host a family member for more than 7 days and gathering information about any work people do outside of Auroville.

The RA WCom shared a [massbulletin](#) offering clarifications on the Standing Order. They pointed out that the order appears to have been issued without proper legal authority because there has not been any consultation with the other two authorities of the Auroville Foundation, the RA and the IAC. Also, it offers a flawed interpretation of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s vision, and goes against core principles of spiritual freedom. They also stated that the order “contains provisions that infringe on basic human rights and constitutional freedoms. The restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, movement, and association raise serious ethical and legal concerns”.

### **Residence Service reduced capacity and renamed**

In the first week of January 2025, the Residents Service (RS) were informed that the ‘HRS’ team will be taking over one of their functions - collecting information about when Aurovilians arrive and depart. At the moment however, RS are still collecting this information. RS were also informed that their name would be changed to ‘Passport and Visa Registration Desk’.

## **Road Construction Update**

Road construction continues across Auroville, with at least 9 sections of road currently being built. Most of the construction work is being completed by CPWD however Michael Bonke's team is building one section of the Crown, which starts at Savithri Bhavan and goes toward PTDC .

The locations in which the roads are being built are;

- [A Radial between Transformation-Revelation](#)
- [The Outer Ring Road between the Southern Service Node and Aurovelo](#)
- [A Radial by Verite](#)
- [A section of the Crown at Savitri Bhavan](#)
- [A Bridge through Darkali watershed](#)
- [A Radial by Vikas/Invocation/Vibrance](#)
- [A section of the Crown through Centrefield](#)
- [A Radial opposite Solar Kitchen](#)
- [A Radial through Aurodam](#)

The total cost of all of the roadworks that have been tendered by CPWD, according to the [government E-Tenders portal](#) is ₹38 crores (\$4.5 million US dollars), with an additional ₹7.6 crores being spent on electrical works. These figures are CPWD estimates so final costs could be higher or lower.

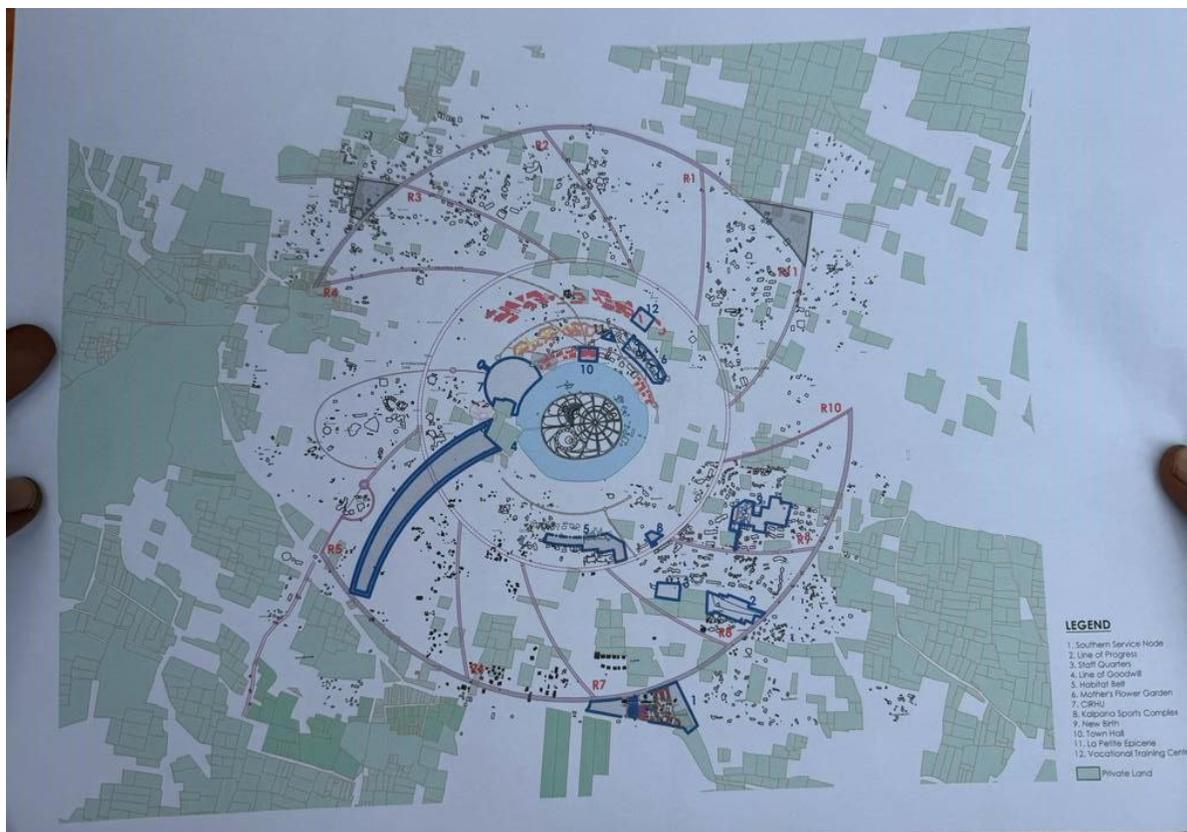
Large areas of forest have been cleared and as of July 2024 the number of mature trees felled so far is over 6,560, of which more than half have a girth of over 1 meter. Additionally, more than 7,330 trees under 15 cm in girth, and more than 20,860 woody plants from the understorey have been cleared since December 2023. These are only the trees that have been surveyed and counted. Due to the sheer amount of clearing and tree felling taking place, not all have been documented, with more trees being felled every day.

The RA TDC recently wrote a [letter](#) to the AVFO 'ATDC' with details about how the extensive deforestation in areas such as Darkali and Bliss have led to a substantial increase in surface runoff which "culminat[ed] in the breach of the Alankuppam-Kottakarai pond bund, which caused flooding in the downstream villages".

In three areas, Transformation/Vikas/Verite, the roads are being built on top of or alongside well-built and well functioning existing roads. However, because the CPWD have made changes to the trajectory of the radials, the roads have been dug up and are being replaced by roads that differ by just a few meters. This means that a number of mature trees have been removed and some buildings at Afsanah's Guest House are now [threatened with demolition](#). In the rest of the areas the roads are new builds, however the majority of them do not connect with any existing infrastructure and their progress is blocked by private lands so they are literal 'roads to nowhere'.

The RA TDC recently [wrote](#) to the Villupuram Joint Committee, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change as well at the GB and the IAC to outline their serious concerns. They highlight that none of the construction contracts (including the lake building at MM) have been given formal approval by state planning authorities, nor do they have the approval of the Residents' Assembly. Other serious issues include lack of financial transparency, threats to safety, environment and community, lack of consideration for sustainable urban planning and

lack of professionalism and integrity.



**MM Soil 'smuggling'**

According to a letter dated December 27th 2024, Major Arun Prakash Ambathy (Retd) raised serious concerns regarding alleged unauthorized soil transportation between states, from Auroville (Tamil Nadu) to Pondicherry.

In his [letter](#) addressed to the Secretary of Auroville, Arun describes two lorries (bearing Tamil Nadu registration numbers) transporting soil from the Matrimandir site in Auroville to Sanjeevi Nagar, Pondicherry. Upon confrontation, the transporters allegedly stated that the operation was directed by Selvam from Matrimandir. The matter was then brought to the attention of AVFO 'ATDC' member Govind, who reportedly stated he was unaware of any granted permissions for such transportation. Subsequently, Rajendran from AVFO 'ATDC' was sent to verify these claims and he too claims to have witnessed the transportation. According to the letter, when Rajendran confronted workers supervising the unloading, they stated that the operation had support from all five Matrimandir executives. The letter further states that multiple soil piles from Matrimandir excavations have been disappearing rapidly, with visible JCB bucket marks indicating mechanical transportation. Of particular concern is the claim that some of this soil is being dumped on private property belonging to Aditi Diamonds. Michael Bonke is one of the Directors of Aditi Diamonds.

In his appeal to Dr. Jayanthi Ravi, Arun requested clarification regarding any existing permissions for this inter-state soil transportation, called for an investigation if no such permissions exist, and urged for immediate action to stop unauthorized excavation and transportation. He also requested a comprehensive audit of the total soil volume excavated from the Matrimandir site.

Video evidence is available [here](#) and [here](#).

## Other Updates and Information

### Report on Darkali Bridge Construction

A detailed [evaluation report](#) published in November 2024 by Satprem Maïni, Director of the Auroville Earth Institute, highlighted several concerns regarding the ongoing construction of a bridge at Darkali for the Crown Road project.

The report indicates that while the initial plan called for a bridge spanning approximately 25 meters to cross a water body, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) is now constructing a 160-meter-long structure. The excavation width reaches up to 25 meters in some areas, significantly exceeding the 9.1-meter limit recommended by the Joint Committee appointed by the National Green Tribunal.

Key findings from the report include:

- The construction has destroyed existing rainwater harvesting systems that previously collected approximately 3 million litres of water annually
- No drainage systems have been planned for managing water flow in an area that handles 60% of rainfall within the Crown
- The project cost has increased from an initial estimate of ₹50 lakhs to approximately ₹5 crores
- The CPWD used inadequate materials and failed to follow proper construction standards for road sub-grade and sub-base preparation
- Required environmental impact assessments were not conducted

The report notes that Darkali stewards had proposed an alternative route that would have preserved the ecosystem while accommodating the road, but this proposal was rejected by the AVFO 'ATDC'. Recent rainfall of 84.1mm over three days has already caused flooding at the construction site, raising concerns about future water management.

The construction continues despite these issues and apparent violations of the Joint Committee's recommendations regarding road width and environmental protection.



## AVFO Enters New Agreements Without RA Consultation

The Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO) continues to enter into institutional agreements without consulting the Residents' Assembly (RA). At least 12 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed since January 2022, with the latest development being a planned connection between Auroville and Gujarat.

On December 25th 2024, Villupuram District Collector D. Mohan [announced](#) a "significant plan" to connect Auroville's development models with Gujarat (see [here](#) for a translation into English). The initiative focuses on environmental protection, sustainable growth, and cultural exchange, particularly in areas of agricultural practices, water conservation, and renewable energy.

This follows a pattern of institutional agreements made by the AVFO without RA involvement. Other partnerships include:

- [University of Pondicherry \(January 2022\)](#)
- [Central Public Works Department \(March 2022\)](#)
- [IIT Madras \(2023\)](#)
- [Indira Ghandi National Centre for the Arts \(February 2024\)](#)
- [Centre for Development of Advanced Computing \(May 2024\)](#)
- [Department of Art & Culture, Pondicherry \(July 2024\)](#)
- [Indian Council for Cultural Relations \(September 2024\)](#)

The Gujarat initiative was preceded by a special talk on "[Good Practices at Auroville](#)" held at the Ahmedabad Management Association on January 3rd, 2024. According to a [social media post](#) by GB member Goutam Ghosal, five MoUs were then signed within a four-day period.

Despite multiple Right to Information (RTI) requests filed by residents, the contents of these MoUs remain undisclosed. Information about agreements being entered into on behalf of Auroville has only reached residents through social media posts and newspaper reports.

## **Gratitude Farm Project Terminated Early**

The Gratitude Farm experimental project, [launched in October 2022](#) by the AVFO 'FAMC' as a two-year initiative to develop natural precision farming methods in Auroville, has been abruptly terminated after 1.5 years. The project's half-acre of land from Demo Farm was handed back to the AVFO 'FAMC' last month, as [reported](#) by the Farm Group.

The land has not been returned to Demo Farm, as originally agreed, but appears to be under use by a member of the AVFO 'Farm Service' without any formal process or communication about its future use. The project had committed to providing training in [Natural Precision Farming](#) as per the MoU, but farmers report significant discrepancies between actual and projected crop yields and lack of promised training delivery.

Following the review of the project's annual report, concerns were raised with the AVFO 'FAMC' regarding inconsistencies in the data. Additionally, the project's termination occurred without explanation or adherence to the MoU's amendment clause, which requires changes to be mutually agreed upon in writing.

On July 18th July 2024, the Farm Group sent [an email](#) to the AVFO 'FAMC' requesting clarification on the early termination, evaluation of project outcomes, and plans for the land's future use. No response has been received to date.

The Farm Group emphasizes that this initiative was intended to benefit Auroville farming through knowledge sharing and training, but these benefits have not materialized. Community members with questions or suggestions are invited to contact [aurovillefarmgroup@gmail.com](mailto:aurovillefarmgroup@gmail.com).

## Miscellaneous News

- **Further attempts to take over Afsaneh Guest House:** On 30th December 2024, a group of AVFO 'working group' members [attended Afsaneh's Guest House](#) to demand that the management team hand over the keys. The request was refused on the basis that the Code of Conduct is not being followed. The AVFO members eventually left.
- **Auroville and Its Destinies:** An Aurovilian has shared a text in [English](#) and [French](#), addressed to "to all those who are concerned with the existence and the path of Auroville."
- **RA TDC request to stop using cycle paths:** RA TDC sent out a [massbulletin](#) at the end of December 2024, highlighting the dangerous usage of cycle paths around the school area in Auroville.

# Media & Other Links

- **Mediapart.fr:** 28th December 2024: [Inde : le crépuscule d'Auroville, cité utopique brisée par le pouvoir et les promoteurs](#) (In French) by Côme Bastin
- **RA Forest Caretakers:** 31st December 2024: [Humorous Newsletter No.4](#)
- **Lesoir.be:** 30th December 2024 [Inde : la cité utopique et internationale d'Auroville au bord de l'implosion](#) by Côme Bastin

## 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](mailto: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.

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