

## ***Auroville Bulletin 10: A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today***

March 21st 2022

### **Recent events update:**

- **Auroville Council poll results:** The results from the AV Council poll are in. The top 3 RADs in order of priority are:
  1. No Confidence in and a new selection of the Working Committee
  2. ATDC membership through an office order
  3. Internal Exit Policy

Detailed analysis of the results were sent by email and can be found [here](#).

The Auroville Council has also sent [an update](#) since the announcement, informing the community that although the Selection Process RAD will be concluded before the RADs on Working Committee and ATDC membership, the Selection Process itself will be held afterwards. Initially scheduled for April, the upcoming Selection Process is therefore delayed and will be held earliest by the end of May. This means that “the terms of any outgoing members is extended until [the next Selection Process], unless the outcome of one of the upcoming RADs suggests otherwise”.

**Following on from this, the RA have announced the follow up RAM** for the Selection Process RAD. This will be held on Monday March 28th 4-6pm at the Unity Pavilion. It is important that every voice is heard on this important topic, so please attend if you can.

- **FAMC update:** The FAMC posted the following letter on AuroNet to state that they are still at an impasse with the AV Foundation Office:

*“As a follow-up to our communication to the community on 8 February ([“Regarding the FAMC”](#)), we would like to update you that we are still at an impasse with the AV Foundation office with regard to the standing of the FAMC and there has been a breakdown in communication. This impasse is largely related to the legitimacy of the FAMC as a committee of the Residents’ Assembly, there being an insistence on the side of the Foundation office that the FAMC is a committee of the Governing Board, and related issues such as the Secretary being the convenor of the FAMC and what that would imply or practically entail.*

*We will continue to make efforts to bridge this impasse and will update the community should any further developments occur.”*

- **Youth Center Art Car:** On Sunday 13th March, Auroville woke up to a redesign of the Youth Centre Art Car located on the crossing to Transition School and Transformation ([see old picture](#)). Overnight an anonymous political artist transformed the car in protest of the violent actions against the Youth Centre condoned by the AV Foundation Office. The car was painted black in flames with the words “Property of the Auroville Foundation” stamped on one side and an arrow axe lodged into the

other side and can be seen [here](#). On Monday a group of children redecorated it with flowers, peace signs and the Auroville symbol and it is now displayed like [this](#).

- **Visa issue update:** In a recent [article in the Print](#) the Secretary was quoted: “Nobody’s visas have been withheld but, yes, it all depends on the way they abide by what is expected of them legally, ethically, morally, spiritually of this project. We have evidence of people involved in illegal activities, obstruction of the intended city and it is entirely for authorities to take a call on it”.

Contrary to her statement, the threat to Auroville residents who rely on Entry Visas is increasing. It appears that the Secretary is using changes in the usual 5-year visa status as a punishment for those who voice disagreement with the TDC. It also appears that if an Aurovilian’s “moral and spiritual” expectations do not meet her unspecified standards, that she sees withholding visas to foreign residents as a legitimate course of action. She makes claims that the Foundation has evidence that people are involved in illegal activities, however, there appears to be no investigation into these nebulous allegations and no evidence has been shared with the community.

To date, several Aurovilians, some long-term residents or here since birth, have only received a three-month extension recommendation letter. The visa extensions have not been issued as there is no current process to give such a short extension and the RRO in Pondy does not know how to process the requests. The RRO has passed on the query to the Chennai FRRO and is awaiting a response. In the meantime, some Aurovilians waiting for a visa extension have instead been told that they can be only given an Exit Visa.

For some of the Aurovilians who received shortened visa recommendation letters, the Secretary of the AV Foundation has implied that it was due to their participation in the protests within Auroville, which is considered as not abiding by the laws of the GOI. For others who were not actively involved in the protests, the Secretary has hinted that it was not due to their own actions but due to their connections to others in the community who were not in allegiance with the Auroville Foundation Office plans.

Several Aurovilians, including families with young children, are now faced with imminent uncertainty regarding their residence. Omid, a teacher in one of Auroville’s schools and an active and valuable member of the community who has been an Aurovilian since 2019 (living in Auroville since 2016), requested an extension for his one year visa in November 2021. After signing the [declaration form](#), he was given a three month visa recommendation letter on February 10th, with the extension expiring on April 17th. Since the visa was officially issued on January 18th, Omid could not stay longer than only 2 months without technically overstaying his visa, and receiving a black mark on his visa record. As with the other 3-month recommendation letters, it was not processed by the RRO due to the unprecedented nature of the short visa. He is now faced with extreme uncertainty and he is leaving Auroville without knowing if he will be able to return to his home here. He has had

no further clarification on the matter from the AVFoundation Office despite the WC and his place of work sending letters of appeal on his behalf.

If you are concerned about or directly affected by withheld visas or short extensions, please email the Working Committee ([workingcom@auroville.org.in](mailto:workingcom@auroville.org.in)) urgently. Legal advice may also be available through the Working Committee, please enquire with them. Visa threats and a lack of transparency on procedure are fear tactics that are not substantiated legally. It is important for the community to remain calm and seek support through official channels. Rest assured that this matter is being taken up. The official Auroville visa policy as published by the Ministry of Home Affairs is available at [this](#) link, see pages 26 and 27.

- **Auroville Festival Tree Planting:** One of the many concerns regarding the recent indiscriminate bulldozing for the crown road by the ATDC at the request of the Secretary of the AV Foundation, is the apparent lack of understanding regarding the ecological reality of Auroville and its bioregion and the absence of adequate consultation with local experts in the field. This has been demonstrated again with the recent '[tree planting event](#)' carried out during the AV22 Festival. The Forest Group has shared their notes from their monthly meeting on the matter:

#### Random Tree planting

As a point of information and for future reference; several Barringtonia asiatica saplings were recently planted by the "Festival Group" beside the road between Transition and Revelation. In contrast to the trees planted by Island along the crown road in recent years, the planting of these trees raises several points:

- These are the wrong species for roadside planting as
  - They have large, hard, fruit which could cause accidents and damage and;
  - They are not drought-tolerant (roadside trees need to be extra tough)
- They are planted in the wrong place:
  - On the proposed radial RoW and;
  - Several in water drains, so new drains will need to be made to avoid flooding.
- They were planted with the summer coming.
- They were planted without adequate protection against grazing.
- It is unclear if those providing underground utilities in the area were consulted.
- It is unlikely that an adequate budget had been set aside for a minimum of three years of after care."

## **Action needed:**

- **Write to the Working Committee:** Please continue to write to the Working Committee ([workingcom@auroville.org.in](mailto:workingcom@auroville.org.in)) to ask what they are doing regarding these unprecedented visa issues. It is important that they hear the voices of the community at large on this subject.

## Recent news articles:

- *“RSS-BJP take-over attempt or blind opposition to reform? A road divides heart of Auroville”* by Anusha Ravi Sood, published on 15th March 2022 in ThePrint: <https://theprint.in/india/rss-bjp-take-over-attempt-or-blind-opposition-to-reform-a-road-divides-heart-of-auroville/871874/>
- <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/sunday-edition/design-of-a-new-chapter.html>
- A short (10 minute) video interview with Deepika from Pebble Garden about her and Bernard’s inspiring reforestation work and her vital work with endangered seed species. <https://www.thequint.com/climate-change/me-the-change-deepika-kundaji-pebble-garden-forest-auroville-pondicherry-tn-bernard-farmer>

## 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.