

Auroville Bulletin 11: A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

28th March 2022

Recent events update:

- **Follow-up RA Meeting on a new selection methodology TODAY:** The RA Service has announced the follow up RA Meeting for the Selection Process RAD. This RA Meeting will be the occasion for those who have worked on a new selection methodology for our 'Participatory Working Groups' to present the feedback received from the community, and the way it has been integrated. This meeting will be held **TODAY, Monday March 28th 4-6pm** at the Unity Pavilion.

Contrary to what is being shared by few residents on Auronet, Whatsapp and other platforms, this and every RA Meeting is the legitimate means for Aurovilians to voice their opinions and to help shape the future of our community. It is certain that these processes are not perfect, however that does not mean that the power to decide how Auroville develops should be handed over to a small group of people, some of whom are not Aurovilian themselves. The RA have recently shared an [article](#) on Auronet rebutting some of the claims made by a community member.

- **Upcoming RA Meeting on the Working Committee (WCom):** Since the overwhelming majority of the Auroville Council's poll participants have selected the RAD on the Working Committee as their top priority ('vote of no confidence and new selection of the Working Committee'), the petitioner representatives & coordination team for the WCom RAD have recently published an announcement on Auronet (in [English](#), [French](#) and [Tamil](#)). In this announcement, they express having recently met the RAS "to launch the process" and specify that "information will be published soon". They also present their new team, which is composed of Lakshmi and Sandeep (as petitioner representatives) and Dinagar, Divya L, Henrike, Suryamayi (as petitioners' coordination team), and which is assisted by additional resource persons. There will be an update on the WCom RAD in the coming days, for the time being you can read the "Short overview on the concerns of the petitioners" which is available in [English](#), [Tamil](#) and [French](#). You can also read a more detailed overview on the extensive background document, which is also available in [English](#), [Tamil](#) and [French](#).
- **ATDC update:** Although no formal announcement has been made yet, it appears that Sreevatsa has resigned from ATDC, and will officially leave at the end of March. This will leave only two Aurovilian members: Toby and Anbu, neither of whom have been through a community process for selection. This directly questions their legitimacy in

holding these positions. Sindhuja and Joel are reportedly assisting the ATDC but it is not clear in what capacity.

- **Anadi's visa story:** Anadi, who was raised in Auroville and has lived here his whole life, applied for a 5 year visa for himself and his daughter. After waiting almost 3 months for a letter from the Foundation office for his 5 year visa, he received a 3 months visa only a day before his departure to Italy. His young daughter's application to renew her 5 year visa was submitted on the 3rd of March, and within the month received a recommendation letter for her 5 year visa.

The following story details the process it took Anadi to obtain his 3 month recommendation letter, as well as his interaction with the Secretary. To ensure that both Anadi and his daughter had their visa before departure he visited the Foundation Office for 5 days, however the Secretary was not present. Finally, after waiting a whole day at the Foundation building, he and some other Aurovilians were asked to enter the Secretary's office, during a meeting with her staff, TDC members Anbu and Toby, Dev (from Aurinoco), and Toine, who were present for the following conversation. In the office the Secretary asked Anadi a number of questions, "Why are you here?", "What have you done for Auroville?", "Will you be welcoming to the 47,000 residents coming to Auroville?". As Anadi responded to these questions, the Secretary interrupted him by consistently requesting him to take a biscuit from her desk. Anadi politely declined a number of times, mentioning he was speaking about something important and would like to be fully present for the conversation. After the interview, Anadi asked whether he would be receiving a 5 year recommendation letter from her to which she replied, "that depends". When Anadi inquired what it would depend on, the Secretary responded "it depends on whether you take a biscuit or not". When Anadi asked her if she was serious, she was silent for a time, and then continued to demand "take a biscuit". Finally, conceding to this strange request and feeling as though his recommendation letter depended on it, Anadi took some almonds and cashews near the biscuits. He thanked her and left the Foundation Office, the next day he received his 3 month recommendation letter.

- **Update on Omid's story:** Omid finally received his 3 month visa extension expiring less than two weeks after receipt. He was charged 6000 INR for the 3 month extension (for comparison, a one year visa extension is 8400 INR) as well as a further 10,000 INR as a penalty for overstaying his visa whilst he was waiting for the unprecedentedly short visa extension to be processed.
- **Pitchandikulam property damage:** For over a year, Pitchandikulam stewards and the Land Board have been dealing with a dispute over the road access of newly purchased private property owned within the Masterplan area near Pitchandikulam

forest. Although there is an alternative access point that is a shorter route through Auropark (on the main road), the private landowner prefers the access through forested Auroville land and has chosen to go to the police multiple times and harass Auroville groups and stewards in order to obtain access. On Wednesday 23rd March, this dispute escalated after the Secretary of the AV Foundation allegedly gave the private landowner verbal permission that he could have access to his land via Auroville. Written confirmation of this claim was asked for by the Land Board members, however none was produced. The private landowner hired a JCB and over 40 young men from Pondicherry and the surrounding villages to destroy the locked gate on Auroville property. They then entered the community to intimidate and harass the residents. The Working Committee and Land Board have requested the Secretary to take immediate action and file a criminal complaint for threats, trespass, and destruction of property. Reportedly when asked, the Secretary replied that she wouldn't interfere unless Aurovilians would help her 'build the city'.

- **Claims of tree planting to offset tree felling:** In December, and in the months following, both TDC and the Foundation Office have made repeated claims to Aurovilians and to media reporters that for every tree that has been felled, 4 times (and sometimes it was claimed 10 times) the amount of trees will be planted "somewhere in the greenbelt". It is important to note that until now, no tree nurseries, or forest stewards have been contacted to prepare the saplings for the coming planting seasons. So far, the tree survey found that over 900 trees, and thousands of regenerating saplings were bulldozed. In that case, over 3600 trees would have to be planted.

It is also important to consider that, while any tree planting is recommended, the ecosystem functions provided by a tree of 20-40 years compared to a sapling are vastly different. The effects of the climate crisis are apparent in Auroville as well as all over the world, and mature trees provide an important role in combating climate change. A mature tree significantly reduces temperatures, and can aid in forming a cooler and more livable microclimate. A mature tree is like a big AC unit, they transpire moisture through their leaves and prevent evaporation and heat generation from the ground around them, resulting in cooler temperatures. Seedlings that are freshly planted cannot provide these essential services that take years to develop. By bulldozing and cutting down mature trees we are throwing away 20-40 years of investment into mitigating climate change and solving the water crisis. Trees provide ground cover to the soil, hold back soil erosion, assist percolation of rainfall into groundwater tables, and are homes to insects and wildlife - just to mention a few important jobs.

Action needed:

- **Letter of Support for Aurovilian Indian Citizens to sign:** A letter is going around for Aurovilian Indian citizens to sign to show their support for 5 year visas, and as a statement against the current 'visa threat' situation that many foreign Aurovilians are facing. The link is [here](#), please note that this is specifically for Indian citizens to sign, not foreigners. OCI holders may sign at their own risk.
- **Looking for Media:** A team of residents working on archiving data of December events have asked those who have footage from the Youth Center and Darkali events to please share them through [this folder on Google Photos](#).

Recent news articles:

- <https://openthemagazine.com/essay/the-universal-ideal-of-auroville/>

Changing the narrative:

- The topic of the perfect circle as a 'sacred geometry' or Yantra has come up often regarding the Crown Road, however without experience it can be difficult to understand this aspect of ancient Indian architecture and how it relates to Auroville. A helpful summary by an Aurovilian from a recent Dreamweaving discussion can be found [here](#). Yantra is a drawing, often made up of geometric lines, which serves to invoke certain forces. Interestingly when asked, one of the experts stated that it would be their preferred choice for the land forms to dictate the geometry and not the other way around. The essay and transcripts from the Dreamweaving session explain the ancient architectural tradition of Vaastu Shilpa Shastra and how it can be looked at in the context of Auroville and the master plan.