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Auroville Bulletin 20

**Auronet Restrictions for selected Aurovilians, AVFO
Endorses Ex-WCom, GB 59th Meeting Minutes**

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

30th May, 2022

Hot topics

Auronet restrictions for selected Aurovilians

A few days after the Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO) gained control of Auronet, a number of users reported having their access either barred or limited. It appears that all the users who reported these issues had been vocal in their criticism of the actions of the AVFO, particularly since the events in December 2021. Some reported not being able to log in. Others were not able to [post or comment](#) on posts without prior approval from the Auronet administrators, raising concerns about censorship. It is not clear who the current Auronet admin/moderation team are since the [previous team resigned](#) after AVFO took control. The 'Auroville Foundation' group on Auronet [announced](#) on 23rd May that 'a preliminary review of the platform is currently ongoing, and in the interim days/ weeks certain users may find their access temporarily restricted'.

Consequences of AVFO endorsing the ex-Wcom

Since the attempted takeover of the WCom office, which led to FIRs being filed against 6 Aurovilians, there has been a concerted campaign (on [YouTube](#) and in various newspaper reports, see [here](#) for one example) from the ex-WCom and their self-appointed interim members (Arun, Anu, Joseba, Partha, Selvaraj, Srimoyi and Tine). Their primary aim appears to be to legitimize their group in the eyes of the Auroville community and the wider public outside of Auroville.

RoR (Register of Residents) information: A number of 'Working Updates' have also been posted on Auronet (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). The updates mention the [form](#) that the AVFO aims to use to update the RoR. It is not clear what effect this would have on the RoR and on visa holders and their future applications. A young Aurovillian (Maël) posted several pertinent questions in his [response](#) to the ex-WCom's second update. There has been no reply to date.

On 29th May, the WCom of the Residents Assembly released a [mass bulletin](#) which outlined a number of reasons why the form being proposed by the AVFO, and the request itself, was not necessary. They suggest that 'people take their own decision to submit or not the form received from the Office of the Secretary, as per their own judgment'. This mass bulletin also suggests that Aurovilians could send only the information on the '[Form 1](#)', which is the approved and gazetted document for this purpose, instead of using the new AVFO form.

Visa issues: There are several repercussions of the AVFO's refusal to accept the outcome of the legitimate RAD (Residents Assembly Decision). Most notably, the Secretary allegedly has only accepted visa application paperwork that has been signed by the ex-WCom, as she does not recognize the legitimacy of the new Interim WCom. In several cases last week, Aurovilians have been told to seek signatures

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extra signature from one of the ex-WCom.

When applying for a visa, if you are required to get a signature from an ex-WCom member, please document the process by sending an email to workingcom@auroville.org.in and evolvingalaxy@gmail.com.

Important information about the Working Committee

There is some contradicting information being spread about the Working Committee, and who is entitled to select it. Below are some clarifications:

Who can constitute the Working Committee?

The term of office (how long members are in the Working Committee) as well as the governance (under whose authority it runs) of the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation is decided by the Residents Assembly, according to the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988.

Section 20:

*(2) The Working Committee shall consist of not more than seven members **to be chosen by the Residents' Assembly** from among themselves.*

*(3) The manner of choosing the members of the Working Committee and their term of office shall be such as may be **decided by the Residents' Assembly***

After the RAD on the constitution of the Working Committee, results were published on May 11th, the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly has 3 members (Chali (ToS), Hemant, Sauro), 3 interim members (Elisa, Jürgen, Gilles), and 2 announced resource persons (Ranjith and Raju).

59th Governing Board Minutes

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released. The minutes include several causes for concern including the allowance of people 'contributing regularly' to become Aurovilians without going through the standard entry process and the allocation of Aurovillian staff quarters for AVFO use. For an overview of the meeting minutes see [here](#).

AFVO organise a meeting with GB member for Tamil Aurovilians

On Saturday 28th May, the Secretary hosted a meeting for Tamil Aurovilians at Bharat Nivas. Attendance was [low](#), numbering approximately 130 Tamil Aurovilians plus security members. Some members of the Tamil community in Auroville reported not wishing to attend due to the feeling that this was a political gathering. The first part of the meeting consisted of general talks regarding Auroville by various people including Anbu, Varadaarajan, Thillai, Shyamala, Raman, Shankar, Selvaraj, Amudha and Ramalingam. Selvaraj also spoke about the need to 'build the city'.

The Secretary and the Lt. Governor reportedly arrived over an hour late. The Secretary addressed the gathering and spoke about the visa situation, stating that there is no problem and that she believes in transparency and unity. The Lt. Governor mainly spoke about the richness of Tamil land and the Mother's land. The meeting was advertised as a means to 'update' Tamil Aurovilians on the current situation, however some who attended reported feeling offended as it appeared that the main aim of the meeting was to sway the Tamil population into supporting the recent actions and views of the AVFO. There was no opportunity for a Q&A session, instead The Secretary and the Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, used the occasion to hold a Press Conference to advertise their plans. The occasion was also mentioned in several newspaper reports the following day (see [here](#) for an example).

Censorship on AVFO YouTube and social media channels

Several community members have reported being 'shadow banned' by the AVFO YouTube channel and other social media outlets. This function means that although the commenters themselves can post and read their own comments, no other viewers can see them, thereby silencing community voices attempting to express critical opinions.

Only a few days left to nominate for a Working Group

The nomination phase of the next selection process for working groups is still open, and will run until **Thursday June 2nd**; more information [here](#). This leaves just a few

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including the number of vacant seats for each group, can be found [here](#). The nomination form is accessible [here](#).

Several members of the FAMC (Angelo, Jonas, Lisa, Palani M. and Stephan) have recently announced that they will not stand for the next selection, so the number of vacant seats for FAMC has risen to 7. With regards to the ATDC, the AV Council [posted](#) a useful explainer regarding the upcoming ATDC selection, outlining why 13 new members need to be selected.

Given the extraordinary circumstances that Auroville is going through, **it is important now more than ever to have solid members within our working groups**. Working groups must be able to represent the Residents' Assembly and work for its best interests. If you believe you have a set of skills that can be offered as a working group member, please come forward! If you know of anyone who would be suitable to serve in a working group, please get in touch with that person and ask them to consider joining, ensuring that they fill out the self-nomination form before the deadline.

Other Updates and Information

Email from Dr Karan Singh

Dr Karan Singh, who was Chairman to the Auroville Foundation for two decades, has written [an email](#) to the Secretary in which he asks her to keep in mind that for many years no special authorisation was required to build in Auroville. He states that 'Building the city is important, but technically this can be done anywhere in India by the local P.W.D. Trying to build Auroville without the cooperation of the Aurovilleans is prima facie a contradiction and will go against the whole raison d'être of this unique experiment'. He also appeals for her to make 'serious efforts for reconciliation'.

RAS call for a General Meeting on the topic of the Register of Residents

The Residents Assembly Service (RAS) [informed](#) the community that they sent an email to both the new Interim Working Committee (Chali, Elisa, Gilles, Hemant, Juergen & Sauro) and the ex-WCom & their 'interim members' (Anu, Arun, Joseba,

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‘provide some clarity’ regarding the recent [form](#) sent out by the AVFO, which is apparently being used to update the RoR. The RAS later released copies of the emails between themselves and the 2 groups (see [here](#) & [here](#)) which showed striking differences in the manner and tone of communication.

The Secretary addresses the Auroville Community via YouTube

On 26th May, Dr Jayanti Ravi posted a [video](#) from the AVFO YouTube channel addressing the community. She states that her intention is to manifest the city and bring ‘better governance’ to Auroville, and claims that ‘that there is a certain segment of the residents, a few residents, a few people from Auroville have consistently over the years, also tried to see that there are some obstacles brought to the implementation’. Rod Hemsell has written an analysis of the video which can be read [here](#).

On the issue of visas, she explicitly links the shortened visas to activities that she claims are ‘not legal’, and she states that ‘those of you who are committed to Auroville and want to work in a collaborative way and contribute to the city in terms of being true servitors of the Divine, I think there is absolutely no reason for us to fear or have any apprehension’. Contrary to the Secretary’s claims of ‘illegal activity’ amongst Aurovilians who disagree with her approach to building the city, there has never been any evidence presented of illegal activities committed by any of those who have been given shortened visas. It appears instead that these Aurovilians are considered to be ‘anti-city’ by the AVFO and their visas have been reduced based on that unfounded opinion alone. The Secretary mentions that she has issued 602 Letters of Recommendation, more than 90% of which were for the time period requested, 37 one-year visas, 5 three-month visas, and 0 rejected. However, these numbers do not state how many of these were issued after Dec 5th and in what composition, nor do they mention any distinction between visas issued to foreign Aurovilians/Newcomers vs foreign volunteers. These numbers also fail to address the number of requests kept pending for months on her desk, or directly stalled with the FRRO. There is also no mention of the Aurovilians who recently received only 3-month visas without extension and are currently stuck abroad indefinitely. Importantly, the Secretary also appears to completely disregard the extensive disruption to people’s lives and the psychological and emotional stress caused to those Aurovilians who have been targeted.

The Secretary stated that she wants to speak to the community every Tuesday at her office from 3:30pm - 4:30pm or to air suggestions, concerns, ideas and problems or via email at collaborate.secavf@gmail.com. However, considering the recent atmosphere of visa threats and censorship, many in the community do not feel safe enough to authentically voice their concerns to the Secretary in this manner.

Update on the Dreamweaving process

David, Mona and Omar have shared an [update](#) regarding the Dreamweaving process in the latest issue of the News and Notes, stating that there is an unfortunate obstruction in the collaboration with the Vastu Shilpa Foundation.

Financial Service Clarification

Financial Services [posted](#) a clarification regarding the recent domain change, stating that it was done with their approval 'for technical reasons only'.

Action needed

- **Write to Dr. Karan Singh :** If you would like to express your thanks to Dr. Karan Singh for his recent supportive email, please send him a message on drkaransinghjnmf@gmail.com
- **Nominate for the Working Groups:** The closing date to nominate for the upcoming selection process is on Thursday June 2nd; please see above for details.
- **Call for financial support:** If you would like to donate towards legal and delegation fees please email evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com.

Media & Other Links

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[from The Hindu on Dr. Singh's letter to the Secretary https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/puducherry/calls-for-restoring-harmony-amid-spiralling-tensions-in-auroville/article65454019.ece?homepage=true](https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/puducherry/calls-for-restoring-harmony-amid-spiralling-tensions-in-auroville/article65454019.ece?homepage=true)

- **Media Release from the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly**
[Press release from the Working Committee](#)

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. are welcome to write to evolvingalaxy@gmail.com.

Please also share your thoughts and suggestions by replying to this email.

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.

For those who have had previous technical problems receiving the Bulletin, the list of all previous Bulletin issues is accessible here: <https://linktr.ee/evolvingalaxy>

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