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# Auroville Bulletin 27

## **Court Cases Update, AVC room presence & SAIER staff quarters taken over**

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A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

13th July 2022

*Note: There are important actions to take at the end of each Bulletin, if you are reading on your phone you may need to click 'see more' to view the entire bulletin.*

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

# Hot topics

## Update on three court cases heard on Monday 11th July

Aurovilians Hemant Lamba, Krishna Devanandan and Anita Gaur, whose writ petitions relating to the Auroville Foundation's actions in regards to the operation of the Residents' Assembly's Working Committee (WCom of the RA), Town Development Council (TDC) and Outreach Media (ORM), have had their submissions (arguments) heard in the Madras High Court on 11th July.

On Monday 11th July, the hearing regarding the WCom began. Counsel on behalf of the WCom of the RA said that neither the Secretary nor any other officer could interfere with the functions and powers of the Residents' Assembly (RA), as the RA is a statutory body. It was argued that the WCom is constituted by the RA and no other. It was argued that the duty of updating the Register of Residents (RoR) is solely the job of the Secretary of the AVF and none other, and that the RA's powers could not be undermined on any such grounds as it is a functional body of the Foundation. The respondent AV Foundation was inclined to agree with all these submissions.

The AV Foundation was represented by the lawyer for the second respondents (Anu, Arun, Partha, Srimoyi) senior advocate P S Raman (who is engaged by the office of Nityaesh and Vaibhav, Dr. Jayanthi Ravi's son-in-law). The AV Foundation, represented by their lawyers, stated that they had respect for the setup of Auroville governance and that they were only seeking time to update RoR before the RA continues with its job.

The Secretary of the AV Foundation, Dr Jayanthi Ravi, spoke in open court and referred to the residents of Auroville as "belligerent" (she later changed her remark to only "some residents" when it was challenged), "landlords", "foreigners" and "squatters" amongst other derogatory names. She also stated that she was doing the job given by the Mother.

Counsel for the Aurovillian petitioners then argued that the Residents' Assembly was being undermined and the residents of Auroville were being insulted in open court, and that this was not acceptable. The court accepted this argument and reiterated the continuance of the [Stay](#) Order to not demolish any part of Elodie and Txuma's home.

The Secretary of the AV Foundation asked the Court for permission to demolish

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hearings to finish before any actions, and that the stay order is to continue for the time being.

The lawyers for the WCom petition began their submissions in court on Monday 11th July but didn't finish. Counter arguments from the AV Foundation are also yet to take place (the lawyer for the first respondent, ASG R Shankarnarayan, was not present). The next hearing is scheduled for Monday 18th July. The cases for the TDC and ORM have not yet begun and are also scheduled to take place on Monday 18th July.

For more information regarding the cases, search for the name of the petitioner for each case on the Madras High Court website: <https://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/>

## **'Interim Status Quo' Order given by Madras High Court preventing the demolition of Txuma & Elodie's bathroom**

For the past 12 months residents of Centre Field who live in the proposed Crown area have been unsure whether their homes and other buildings would be demolished by the AVFO's 'ATDC'. Since Tapas & Mita's house was demolished without warning in May 2022, Txuma and Elodie have been living with the threat that their bathroom would be demolished without notice. They were promised by AVFO's 'ATDC' to be given the time, the funds and the necessary No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the relocation of their bathroom away from the proposed path of the Crown Road. However, none of the promises made were followed through, so for several months they were left in an uncertain situation.

At the end of June 2022, they received an email from the AVFO's 'ATDC' informing them that they needed to 'relocate' immediately, and to consult the Housing Service to find immediate alternative housing since their bathroom would be demolished imminently. In contrast to the previous conversations, they were informed that because the house had been built in 1997 with a temporary NOC, no funds were available to compensate them. Elodie and Txuma contacted Housing Services but were not able to find immediate alternative housing options. One week later, they received a second email informing them that the bathroom would be demolished the following day.

An emergency Court [Stay](#) Order from the Madras High Court to stop the proposed demolition work was granted on Friday 8th July, preventing the demolition from going ahead. This stay order will continue at least until the court proceedings continue on Monday 18th July.

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Since the 2nd July, Aurovilians have kept a continuous presence in the Auroville Council room in the Town Hall building, following an [email](#), sent on 1st July by Lieve Claes of AVFO's appointed ACUR (Town Hall) management, demanding that the AV Council vacate their meeting room and desks with less than 24 hours notice. There has been a 24 hour presence and despite police threats, no electricity for the first two days and lack of bathroom access, a number of people volunteered to ensure that AV Council room remains usable for RA approved working groups.

On Sunday 10th July, a member of the AVFO's 'ATDC' along with three workers came to install [metal sliding doors](#) to block access to the upper floors of the Town Hall. There are several other potential fire hazards caused by the recent actions of the new ACUR management, including locking and placing [ropes & chains](#) around a number of the doors in the Town Hall since the beginning of the presence in the AV Council room. Blocking access to different parts of the Town Hall in this way is unprecedented, and marks a serious shift from the sense of openness and trust Auroville aims to foster.

**The presence in the AV Council meeting room has so far been held by a small number of committed Aurovilians. As the court cases will only continue next Monday 18th July, it seems that this action will be necessary for a longer period. More people are needed to step up and assist. If you can spare even one or two hours please pass by the AVC room and give your name - please note, access is only available through the first floor balcony doors. The AVC meeting room is a vital resource for the continued functioning of the Working Groups of the RA, so please help protect it if you can.**

## **SAIIR staff quarters 'Harmony' & 'Prosperity' taken over by AVFO**

Last week a member of the AVFO took the keys to all the remaining unallocated units of the newly built SAIIR staff quarters 'Harmony' & 'Prosperity', located near Transformation community. No formal notice was given and there is no clarity as to whether the remaining units will be allocated as per standard procedure or not. A number of Aurovilians, some of whom have been waiting for several years to move into the staff quarters, are now unsure whether they will be able to move into the homes allocated to them.

## JCB present in Youth Centre area

On Friday 8th and Saturday 9th July, without prior notice, a JCB entered the Youth Centre accompanied by Joel Van Lierde (“spokesperson” for the AVFO) to ‘flatten the road area’. The JCB started to destroy the vegetable garden next to the pizza oven and a 3 meter tall pipal as well as many other smaller trees and bushes were destroyed. On Saturday 9th July afternoon the JCB left a large [earth mound](#) blocking the main road access to the Youth Centre, a dangerous obstruction that may have caused road accidents. It was only removed on the insistence of an Aurovillian present at the Youth Centre. On Monday 11th July, the JCB returned to the Youth Centre area and continued clearing trees and bushes despite the clear ruling of the NGT court case that no trees were to be touched before the survey by the NGT Joint Committee and a formal decision is taken.

On Tuesday 12th, another JCB accompanied by Joel came to the Youth Centre area. When asked for the relevant work order, he refused to produce one and claimed that the residents present were ‘blocking’ the work of the Government of India since this work was executed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD). This was followed by an [announcement](#) from AVFO naming the people present and threatening legal action against them, in another move to silence the concerns of the residents of Auroville. To date, the contract with the CPWD and the subsequent work orders have not yet been shared with the Residents’ Assembly or its working groups.

## Darkali survey and the NGT Joint Committee

While the National Green Tribunal (NGT) Joint Committee was in Auroville last week, they were under the supervision of the AVFO’s ‘ATDC’. The TDC of the RA was able to submit a report on the land, trees and water bodies which would be affected should the Crown Road be built along the path that is currently proposed by the AVFO’s ‘ATDC’, however the Joint Committee has stated that they have no obligation to take this research into account. The Joint Committee is continuing to conduct their survey of Darkali and may soon share the results of the survey.

Although the NGT Joint Committee is supposed to be impartial, it appears to favour collaboration only with the AVFO. The Working Groups of the Residents’ Assembly were excluded from numerous meetings involving the AVFO and the Joint Committee and would not have been heard at all if they had not insisted on a short meeting and a submission of their report as a minimum.

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The GB visited Auroville on the 11th and 12th July, with the IAC joining them on the 12th July for a joint meeting. They had originally planned to visit from the 9th July, and to visit several units in Auroville however these plans were cancelled without giving a reason. The WCom of the RA sent an [email](#) to the GB noting that they had not been officially informed of the visit. To date, this email has not been responded to.

## **Financial Service (FS) accounts of Working Groups of the RA have been frozen**

Members' access to the Financial Services (FS) accounts of both the WCom of the RA and the FAMC of the RA have been blocked in the past month, meaning that the staff and those members of the working groups who receive a maintenance might have difficulties to be paid going forward. Despite the ongoing court case, which specifically mentioned that 'no proceedings' should be carried out against the petitioners (i.e. the WCom of the RA), FS management removed access to the FS account from RA WCom members. At a later date, the access to their account was also removed from the FAMC of the RA members. Although WCom members have been assured that access to the accounts will be given back should FS be directed to by the courts, actions such as these raise doubts about the impartiality of FS members, as in the interim period it will be difficult for the groups to continue to function properly.

## **Update on Some Individual Visa Stories**

In past bulletins, there have been [detailed accounts](#) of Aurovilians facing visa issues. A family: Margherita Fassi, Batoo and their infant son as well as two other Aurovilians: Anadi and Omid are still abroad, unable to return to Auroville.

- After numerous visits to the Auroville Foundation Office, and one encounter with the Secretary, Anadi received a recommendation letter for a 3 month visa hours before his departure to Italy. He has been unable to apply for an entry visa using this recommendation letter because it is not accepted by the Indian Embassy in Italy.
- Margherita and her son applied for a recommendation letter for new visas in November 2021. Her husband, Batoo, had a valid visa, which has now expired since May 2022. Since the family has no valid visas, and Margherita and her young son have been waiting for recommendation letters for over 6 months, they have been forced to stay in Italy. To make ends meet Margherita has had to work two jobs, as Batoo (a Sudanese national) applies for the necessary

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- Omid was given a 3 month recommendation letter in February 2022. He is currently staying in his native Iran and has not yet planned how he will return.

## Community Potluck

The organisers of the planned community potluck, due to take place on 16th July 6-9pm at Certitude sportsground, have released the [attached information](#) and [poster](#) about the event. Some assistance is needed to help organise the event so please email [avcommunitygathering@gmail.com](mailto:avcommunitygathering@gmail.com) if you are able to offer your help.

## Action needed

- **Presence needed at Town Hall, AVC meeting room:** Please see above to find out how you can assist with your presence in the AVC meeting room in the coming days.
- **New petition to sign:** [Jhatkaa.org](http://Jhatkaa.org) have launched a petition asking for the attacks on Auroville and its forests to stop. You can sign it [here](#).
- **Call for financial support:** If you would like to donate towards legal and delegation fees please email [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com).

## 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:

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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](mailto: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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