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Auroville Bulletin 43

GB Chairman visit to Auroville, Land update and Update on visas

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

October 23rd, 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](#).

Urgent Actions

- **BCC calls for support for Aurovilians on bridging maintenances:** At least 20 Aurovilians have been moved onto bridging maintenances without warning, while they are still working for Auroville. Please see [here](#) for more information, and email BCC on bccoffice@auroville.services or bccauroville@gmail.com.
- **Financial support for legal fees:** If you would like to donate towards legal and delegation fees please email evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com. Please see [here](#) for more information about why further financial assistance is necessary.
- **Help with the AVC room vigil:** For over 3 months a small group of Aurovilians have held a 24/7 vigil in the AVC room in Town Hall. **This week there was an attempt to take control of the room away from the RA-appointed groups (see below for more details).** Your help is urgently needed, please assist with just one or two hours a week of presence. Contact avcouncil@auroville.services or WhatsApp 94430 03617 to sign up.
- **Join the Wednesdays for Auroville meetings:** There is a weekly community meeting held at the Tibetan Pavilion, every Wednesday 4.30-6pm. You can find the poster for it [here](#).

Hot topics

Meeting of RA WCom with Chairman of the Governing Board

The Chairman of the Governing Board, Sri RN Ravi, visited Auroville on Tuesday 18th and Wednesday 19th of October. On his visit, the honourable Chairman visited several Auroville locations and initiatives, such as the CSR campus, AuroOrchard farm, Upasana, Tibetan Pavilion, and Shradhanjali. He was

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far refused to meet the Residents' Assembly or the groups appointed by it, the Chairman agreed to a 2-hour meeting with the RA WCom.

The RA WCom sent out [a massbulletin](#) reporting on their meeting with the Chairman, in which they presented the efforts Auroville has made towards developing the city and noting that “for a positive way forward to be found, people need to feel secure and the current state of fear needs to come to an end.” The RA WCom also states that this meeting is a hopeful first step in establishing contact with the Governing Board, through its Chairman. For a short overview of what was presented to the Chairman, please see the [note](#) and [powerpoint](#) prepared for the occasion.

GB member vilifies Aurovilians on social media

Auroville Governing Board member Goutam Ghosal has made [a series of remarks](#) on his personal social media about “harassment” that has allegedly been directed towards Sindhuja Jagadeesh, a member of AVFO’s ‘ATDC’. On Twitter and Facebook he claimed that some Aurovilians are “Maoists” and “criminals [who] have occupied the Mother’s space”, and states that Auroville is “a land occupied by hostile forces” and that “goons should be deregistered from the RoR.” In one comment on Twitter, he claimed that “most of them [the so-called ‘anti-development squad’] are hardcore criminals, both foreigners n Indians.”

Professor Ghosal did not refer to anyone by name nor give the reason for these public statements. It is of concern that a member of the Governing Board would hold such low opinions of Aurovilians and Auroville in general, and that he has repeated the false narrative that those who oppose the actions of the current administration are “criminals”.

Land update: Ami/Abri/Evergreen, exchange of Tindivanam road plot

The case around the Ami/Abri/Evergreen land grab, contesting the ‘ownership’ claimed by PKS, was listed in Court on Thursday, 20th of October. The judgment is expected to be given on the 2nd of November. In the meantime, Friend of Auroville Michael Bonke, whose land is opposite Evergreen and of which a portion has been claimed by PKS earlier, had his documents updated and

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full course of justice before any changes can be made on the ground, and the current status quo continues.

A piece of Auroville land close to Tindivanam road, stewarded by Murthy, was exchanged last week. These land exchanges were discontinued by the previous Secretary, Mr. Chunkath, because they were financially unfavourable to Auroville. Extensive due diligence processes put in place by Mr. Chunkath for land purchases were also seemingly not followed by the current administration. Previously, the possibility of land exchange created a situation whereby many landowners refused to sell, hoping for land exchanges much more financially favourable to them. This raises concern that a similar situation will occur now.

Legal update

Upcoming dates

10.11.2022 — National Green Tribunal hearing with regard to the Joint Committee report

To be announced — Supreme Court appeal regarding National Green Tribunal Ruling

To be announced — Madras High Court hearing on the FAMC case

To be announced — Hearing of AVFO appeal of the Madras High Court judgment of 12th Aug

To be announced — Madras High Court hearing on the 2022 Standing Order on ATDC

To be announced — Hearing on quash petition for FIRs on 6 Aurovilians

Supreme Court - appeal of AVFO regarding National Green Tribunal Ruling:

The case was listed for Thursday, 20th October, but it was not heard due to unavailability of a judge. A new date is yet to be announced.

Madras High Court - ATDC Office Order: The petition challenging the Office Order appointing members to the ATDC was heard in court on Thursday 13th October. Following this hearing, several interpretations and hearsay have been floating around. However, the court order (the official document detailing the

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as the court order is posted.

Other Updates and Information

Letters of recommendation / visa update

As was shared by the RA WCom at the community meeting on 17th October, the situation regarding letters of recommendation for visas is still ongoing.

A small group of people have been given letters for very short time periods (for example, 3 months instead of 5 years) seemingly for holding opposing views to the AVFO. In several instances, family members of those expressing disagreement with her have also been targeted. Since the Auroville Visa Policy as published by the Ministry of Home Affairs does not provide for 3-month visa extensions, these visas could not be processed and some Aurovilians have been forced to leave on an Exit Visa. But there is a much larger group of people who have been given one year letters instead of the expected 5 years. In most cases, the letters of recommendation are given just a few days ahead of the visa expiring, in spite of the required paperwork being handed in several months in advance. In other cases the visas expired months ago, and the residents are still awaiting their letter of recommendations without news.

Several older Aurovilians who devoted most of their lives to Auroville were also targeted with shortened letters of recommendation. Most recently, this included [Frederick](#), who was the first Aurovilian recommended into Auroville by the Mother. Incidentally, Frederick was also the first Aurovilian to receive a visa recommendation directly signed by the hand of the Mother, under the name of Mirra Alfassa with her passport details. Frederick has helped materialise a long list of essential projects for Auroville, including initiating the free midday meal, founding the Tamil Fund for Rural Development, beginning the first school in Aspiration and a long involvement with physical education in Auroville schools. Despite this, he was only given a one-year letter, 3 months after his visa had expired. When asked, the Secretary cited unspecified 'complaints' as the reason for giving this letter, demonstrating again that she is placing herself as a judge over Aurovilians without any proper enquiry, nor opportunity to respond.

These tactics have created fear and uncertainty amongst the section of the

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will arrive. Additionally, one year visas are over time significantly more costly than 5 year visas, creating a new financial pressure. Another emerging issue is that previously, the RA BCC gave financial assistance to those who were fined by the RRO due to late letters, however, since the recent take over of the RA BCC, they no longer have access to make these financial transfers.

These practices have upended several decades of visa stability for foreign Aurovilians, stability which should be an essential prerequisite for building the international community as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Housing Update

The Housing Board released an update regarding the current situation in Housing Service and the “supposed removal from [their] positions as Housing Board members”.

They noted that the contested [Office Order](#) produced by the AVFO’s ‘FAMC’ after the ‘reconstitution’ of the Housing Group only mentioned the Housing Service and not the Housing Board. The Housing Board is still a legitimate entity as it has been constituted via a community process and operates according to a [community-approved mandate](#). However, the new AVFO Housing team [do not recognise the legitimacy](#) of the Housing Board and have also taken over their roles and responsibilities.

The Housing Board also mentioned that “Certain matters ... have been brought to our attention which show that the new team are overstepping their mandate and are making unilateral decisions. Already, some of these decisions have led to Auroville assets being allocated without following the guidelines of the Housing Policy.” With regard to house allocations, the [Housing Policy](#) states that “The Housing Board will make the allocation of all houses and apartments. In making any temporary allocation, the Housing Board will collaborate with the steward and the community in which the house or apartment is situated.” Currently the new AVFO Housing Service is making decisions on its own without consulting the Housing Board or the concerned stewards and communities.

AVFO ACUR management again attempts to takeover the AV Council room

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Hall Management team to takeover the AV Council room via physical force in July, the group of community members who have been holding the room 24/7 have largely been left unbothered by the members of the AVFO's 'Working Groups'. Instead, other methods have been used to attempt to bring the vigil to an end, in particular the cutting of the electricity to the room.

This week another member of the 'ACUR team', Venkatesh, came to the room while a single community member was present on vigil and requested that the room be handed over to him for a meeting to be held by the AVFO's 'FAMC'. A call went out to the community to assist, and several residents arrived in support of the vigil. They expressed a lack of trust that the room would be handed back after the meeting. Venkatesh phoned Chandresh, a member of the AVFO's 'FAMC', who appeared to not know about the long-running vigil and insisted on a schedule to 'share' the room. The vigil-keepers firmly reiterated that this would not be possible and after some time Venkatesh left. It is important to note that the Auroville Council meeting room is the only space in the Town Hall main building that has not been taken over by the AVFO's 'ACUR team', despite several attempts.

GM of the RA-appointed working groups

The RA-appointed groups held a General Meeting to share recent work and answer questions. The event was held on Monday 17th October in a packed Unity Pavillion. While these events would normally be livestreamed, this is no longer done so that Aurovilians can speak freely without fear of reprisals. After the meeting, some community members aligned with the AVFO claimed that the meeting had been 'exclusive' and that they had not been invited, calling for AVFO's 'FAMC' to cut the maintenances of the Residents' Assembly Service, who usually coordinates such events. The meeting event was shared widely and open to all, in contrast to [a recent meeting of the AVFO groups](#), which was held with a very small list of invitees.

Meetings of the RA-appointed groups are open to anyone, and the Residents' Assembly Service does its best to reach out to all community members. The meeting in question was published beforehand in the News and Notes, and was shared by RAS email and different massbulletin platforms. However, with the unilateral and unexplained takeover of the inboxes of the RAS by the AVFO, the RAS has some trouble reaching everyone as they are no longer able to deliver mails to @auroville.org.in accounts. If you want to be sure to stay updated, please:

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2. Write to the Residents' Service (resservice@auroville.org.in) to share your non-auroville.org.in email address, since the RAS refers to their database;
3. Once sent, forward your request to RAS (raservice@auroville.services).

To subscribe to the RAS Telegram channel please use the following link: <https://telegram.me/+BPINdlbKv7xkMGNI> (you need to install and register the Telegram application on your device). You can also subscribe to the Massbulletin Telegram channel by using the following [link](#).

Clarification regarding BCC membership

The BCC have clarified that no individual from their team is working with the AVFO's 'BCC', despite what [the BCC group page on Auronet](#) may imply. Please be aware that the emails of the CS Contribution team, as well as the BCC Office emails, have also been taken over. Any individual communicating with these email-addresses will not reach the individuals listed on Auronet as part of the CS Contribution team (Anne, Enrica, Jyotiprem, Selvaraj A.), nor will they reach the BCC Office members (Ellie and Sheida). If you would like to get in touch with the RA BCC, please write to bcc@auroville.services.

Media & Other Links

- [Governor RN Ravi visits Auroville](#): (in Tamil) Short article in a Tamil daily national reporting on the visit of the Chairman of the Governing Board.
- [Press release](#): Auroville Working Committee meets with Governor Shri R.N. Ravi

About us

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We are a group of Aurovillians 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.

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