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Auroville Bulletin 46

Chairman Ravi speaks to residents, idol seizures
misinformation, visa update

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

November 15th, 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

Chairman of the Governing Board meets with the Community

The Chairman of the Governing Board and Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri RN Ravi, met with around 600 residents on Monday 7th November at the Unity Pavilion. Mr. Ravi proceeded to outline the Governing Board's views on the current situation. The key point of his address were:

- Auroville is a place for Sadhaks (spiritual devotees), and that currently, he sees Aurovilians as lacking in the strength of their sadhana (spiritual path). Among other statements, he said that spirituality in Auroville was “grossly deficient”. He also sees a lack of agreed upon norms as to who should be allowed to be in Auroville.
- “The ideals of Auroville are being compromised” and that “Auroville needs a shock ... to bring it to its trail”.
- The media efforts of residents since December 2021 “created a bad name for Auroville” and were “not in good taste”.
- More Aurovilians should meditate and work at Matrimandir.
- The RA and GB both are not in ‘power’ as there are only 2 powers: the Constitution and laws of India and the Charter of the Mother.
- The Master Plan is “a decision taken through the due process” and should ideally be “non-negotiable”.

You can read [the full transcript of the address of the Chairman for other points](#).

You can also [view the talk on YouTube](#).



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After an hour long lecture to the residents, the Chairman did not take any questions. He said that the Governing Board is willing to listen and asked Aurovilians to send suggestions on how to develop Auroville and its ideals by email only. He then left the Unity Pavilion, to the surprise of many attendees who had been hoping for some interaction and a time to ask questions to the GB, as pointed out in [a press release](#) issued by the RA WCom. The next day, the RA Working Groups organised a collective meditation around the Banyan tree to which the Governing Board was invited but did not come.

ACTIONS:

On 8th November, the RA WCom sent out [a massbulletin](#) inviting residents to share their thoughts with the Chairman at his official email address, govtam@nic.in. For residents not comfortable with sending their letter directly, it can be sent to workingcom@auroville.services to be forwarded to the Chairman anonymously. If you are willing to write under your own name, please copy in the RA WCom under the same email id.

The AVFO 'WCom' also sent out [a massbulletin](#) 3 days after the event, urging Aurovilians to send their "constructive ideas and suggestions" to a specially set up email address "in the next one week following his talk".

In addition to personal letters, some residents proposed sending a [collective letter](#). This letter was finalised during the meeting on Monday 14th November and the text was agreed by all of those who attended.

'Idol' seizures & misleading media reports

On 8th November, 3 bronze statues were taken from Poppo & Mona's house by the Tamil Nadu police Idol Wing. This is the latest in a series of 'idol' seizures from Aurovilians that have taken place in recent months. Each of the raids has been followed by [media reports](#) which name the concerned Aurovilians and claim that the statues seized were 'antiques', i.e. over 100 years old.

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fact a privately owned shop in Bommayapalayam. The WCom states that no evidence has been produced to prove that any of the items taken from Aurovilians are antiques. All of the statues were purchased legitimately and in the case of Poppo & Mona, they were able to produce an original receipt which showed that one of the statues was purchased in Pondicherry in the 1970s. Despite this, and despite not identifying themselves, producing a warrant, or writing a receipt for the items that were seized, the Idol Wing Police removed the statues from Poppo & Mona's house. [The media reports](#) that appeared the following day incorrectly claimed that the statues were "concealed in an attic" when in fact they were on display in a bedroom. The same report also claimed that the statues were "Chola-Era", however as stated in the WCom announcement "The seized bronze statues were expertized ten years ago by Devasenapati Sthapathy (Rajan) of Swamimalai ... According to Mr. Sthapathy, the 'idols' were about 80 years old". Julietta posted a [statement](#) on behalf of Mona on Auronet in which she clarified the chain of events from their side. A correction was also [published in the Hindu](#) on 10th November.

It is concerning that Aurovilians are being misrepresented in wide-spread media reports implying that they have been engaging in illegal activities. Additionally, these reports have been picked up and spread across social media by Vikram Ram, furthering his long-running attempts to tarnish the reputation of Aurovilians.

Visa update

Satprem of the Auroville Earth Institute

In October, Satprem received a Letter of Recommendation (LoR) from the Office of the Secretary. However the letter also contained a footnote stating: "We have been informed that this person is involved in anti-government works and spreading false information about Auroville Foundation, per information received through the Working Committee. The RRO can decide his request accordingly."

Satprem was applying for a LoR so that he could have a 4th entry into India as the Entry Visa only permits 3 entries a year, and he had to travel for his work. As he has received this letter from the Secretary making these allegations, he will not be able to complete the application and so he will not be able to come back into India until next year.

Margherita, Batoo & Nadir (Kriya)

Margherita F. and her family are still in Italy, as her LoR has been pending since November 2021 and she was forced to leave India without it. She has since re-applied, but so far a letter has not been supplied and so the family are trying to sustain themselves in Italy. As Batoo is not eligible to work in Italy, the burden to find work has fallen entirely on Margherita. The family hope that they can come back to Auroville soon.

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LoR from the Secretary last month, despite it being clear that such short applications cannot be processed.

Anadi (Felicity)

Anadi was given a 3 month LoR earlier this year. As this visa does not exist, he left Auroville without processing the application. He has since re-applied for a new letter but has not received any response. His visa expired in March.

Omid (Fertile)

Omid was the first person to receive a 3-month LoR in March 2022. The letter did not come until 2 months after his visa had expired. Because the FRRO did not know what to do with the application and Omid was already due to leave Auroville, he had to leave on an Exit Visa. At the moment, he is in his home country of Iran and is not actively trying to come back to Auroville.

Sauro (Grace)

Sauro received a LoR from the Secretary, however she included a written statement that he had been involved in 'blocking Government works' and referenced the FIR that was filed by the Undersecretary against him. This means that the letter is essentially unusable as it does not constitute a recommendation. Sauro's visa expired in July.

As well as the individuals named above, more than 70 residents have received letters for less than was recommended, according to the RA WCom. It seems that about 70 LoRs are pending approval at the AVFO, some of which have been waiting for many months. This brings the number of affected residents to approximately 140.

Legal update

Supreme Court - appeal of AVFO regarding National Green Tribunal Ruling: As noted in the previous bulletin, the case has been postponed until January 2023. You can now find [the official order here](#).

National Green Tribunal - hearing with regard to the Joint Committee report: The hearing was postponed until January 2023. The order will be shared once available.

Madras High Court - ATDC Office Order: The petition challenging the ATDC Office Order was dismissed on Thursday 13th October. The court order has now been posted and [can be found here](#).

A short summary of the order:

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1. As the RA is primarily responsible for town planning according to the Auroville Foundation Act, a body like the ATDC needs to be constituted through the RA to stay in line with the Act.
2. The Office Order constituting the ATDC is not proper as it refers to a Standing Order gazetted after the Office Order was issued.

Lawyers for the AVFO respond with the following two main arguments:

1. The GB has the right to constitute its own committees under Section 16 of the Auroville Foundation Act, and no Standing Order impacts this right.
2. The power of the Residents Assembly is only advisory in nature, and this power has not been impacted by the ATDC appointment.

The court agrees that the Governing Board and Residents' Assembly have their own spheres of work, and that as such, the Governing Board has the right to constitute its own committees as laid down in [Section 16](#) and that this is not challengeable.

The court then directs the AVFO to clarify, within 4 weeks of the order, under what provision the AVFO ATDC was constituted, noting that this “must probably be only under Section 16 of the Act”.

Other Updates and Information

Elodie & Txuma dismantle their bathroom

After more than a year of meetings with broken promises by AVFO's 'ATDC', and after receiving intense pressure both psychologically and physically, Elodie, Txuma & Aris decided to dismantle their bathroom themselves. This was done as an act of goodwill, and to confirm their intention not to 'block' any development. According to the current plans of the AVFO's 'ATDC' the bathroom is the only part of the house that sits on the 16.7m Crown Right-of-Way. Photos of the bathroom before and after being dismantled [can be found here](#).

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The AVFO announced [via massbulletin](#) that the last date for the RoR update was Sunday 13th November. This hopefully means that the exercise will soon be complete. However, there have been reports that community members temporarily not in India, for example to visit family or to study abroad, have not all been contacted by the Foundation Office in order to verify their RoR forms.

Auroville Media Liaison needs help

In a video posted on Youtube and on Social Media, Auroville Media Liaison, the communication cell under the RA WCom, has called for the help of all those who could support. More information can be found [here](#).



RA WCom and Auroville Council reports

The RA WCom released their report for August to October. The report contains links to a large number of emails between the WCom & Secretary, as well as the WCom & the GB members. You can find the report [here](#).

The monthly report for October from the Auroville Council can be found [here](#).

Survey on a possible restorative process between the RA,

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The RA Working Groups have launched a survey via [massbulletin](#) to know the community's thoughts on the possibility of starting a restorative process between the RA, GB, and IAC. A restorative process is any process whose main goal is to create mutual understanding and restore relationships. The outcome of the survey will be used by the RA-appointed working groups as a first exploration into when, and how, a restorative process might be started.

You can [fill in the survey here](#).

Errata from Bulletin 45

In the last Bulletin it was mentioned that the planned 'new Town hall' will be located in the area of Serenity - this is incorrect as the new Town Hall project is planned at **Sincerity** community, in the area opposite the main Matrimandir entrance.

Urgent actions needed

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Write to the Chairman of the Governing Board As outlined above, please take the time to share your thoughts and suggestions with the Chairman.

- **Survey on a possible restorative process** : Please take the time to [fill in the survey here.](#)
- **BCC calls for support for Aurovilians on bridging maintenances:** At least 20 Aurovilians have been moved onto a bridging maintenance with no 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 4 months a small group of Aurovilians have held a 24/7 vigil in the AVC room in Town Hall. If you can help, or you need a space for a meeting or any other small group event then please 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.

WEDNESDAYS FOR AUROVILLE

WEDNESDAY
16.11.22

4:30 - 6:00 pm
Tibetan Pavilion

**WEEKLY MEETINGS
FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING**

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Media & Other Links

- [Resistance to Auroville city project distressing, says R.N. Ravi \(The Hindu\)](#) : The Hindu has reported on the Chairman's visit.

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 evolvinggalaxy@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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