

Auroville Bulletin 5 :
A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

9th February 2022

Recent events update:

No more 5-year visas being issued: The Resident's Service have confirmed that, as of yesterday 8th February, only one-year visa applications will be signed by the Secretary.

This sudden change in policy has serious repercussions for Auroville. The 5-year visa application policy had been achieved after enormous efforts with the Home Ministry over several years. Suddenly, we are back to a visa situation of two decades ago, with no explanation. Besides the lack of transparency about the reasoning behind this sudden change to the usual protocol of visa extension, it is a potential threat to the residential status of foreign Aurovilians. It will also affect long-term projects which receive funding over several years because non-Indian Aurovillian project holders will no longer be eligible to apply to run such projects which require long-term residency in India. All Aurovilians, Indian and foreign, are requested to urgently write to the Working Committee to share your concerns (workingcom@auroville.org.in).

Outreach Media: At around 11:50 am yesterday morning (8th February), 6 people from the Foundation office went to the Outreach Media office with a camera and tried to enter by force. They included the Personal Assistant (PA) to the Secretary, the Under-Secretary of the Foundation, the Accounts Officer, an accountant, and the two Aurovilians recently appointed as spokespersons of the Auroville Foundation's Office. Fabienne was alone in the office and locked the door as she felt threatened. Some Aurovilians were called in support and there was a short discussion. One of the 6 persons allegedly informed Fabienne that the FAMC had given their approval for the re-allocation of the assets used by OutreachMedia. After the events, this was checked with an FAMC member and then the whole FAMC team. The FAMC did NOT give approval. The topic had been talked about by the FAMC but no conclusion was reached.

Fabienne managed to leave the place safely. She requested the Working Committee and the FAMC to sort out the matter, and informed them again that she would comply with whatever decision the FAMC's takes.

However, this morning, 9th February, [as this photo shows](#), the main entrance door to the OutreachMedia office was sealed, and a piece of paper specifying that "this property belongs to Auroville Foundation" had been pasted on the door.

This is a reminder to all of us that the Auroville Foundation is a legal entity composed of three authorities, one of which is the Residents' Assembly. Residents of Auroville are part of the Auroville Foundation.

Update: Today, 9th February, in the late morning, the spare key to the Outreach Media office was retrieved by a member of the Auroville Foundation staff from the Auroville Archives without permission from the FAMC. This afternoon, the locks to the office were changed and the spokespersons appointed by the Auroville Foundation's Office (Joel and Sindhuja) have taken possession of the Outreach Media office. They have also sent an email to the Auroville Sysop requesting immediate access to Outreach Media's email addresses and inbox. The Foundation office has [issued a letter today](#) appointing them as Executives of Outreach Media, with Chandresh Patel and Dev Mohanty as advisors.

Communication between FAMC and the Under-Secretary: On the morning of February 8th (yesterday), the Under-Secretary to the Foundation informed the FAMC that from that day onwards the meetings of the FAMC would be convened by the Secretary or her nominee, based on a reading of the Rules and Regulations 1997 which mention that the FAMC is a Committee of the Governing Board. To this the FAMC replied this afternoon, based on a different reading of the AV Foundation Act 1988 and the Rules and Regulations 1997, that they were a committee selected by the Residents' Assembly and with a mandate given to them by the Residents' Assembly. Hence they informed the Under-Secretary that they would continue with their way of working and that as usual the Secretariat of the Foundation would be welcome to attend their meetings. This communication has been posted on Auronet and can be found [here](#).

Understanding the legalities regarding FAMC:

- This dispute between the FAMC and the Foundation is over what the 1997 Auroville Foundation Rules mean. FAMC was formed pursuant to the 1997 Rules. These Rules appeared in the Gazette of India on 22 November 1997. Consequently, they have the status of law. They cannot be unilaterally bypassed by the GB without breaching law.
- The 1997 Rules makes two seemingly contradictory statements regarding the FAMC:
 - Rule 2(6) says: ““FAMC” means the Funds and Assets Management Committee **constituted by Governing Board** under Sub-section (1) of section 16”
 - Rule 4(d) says the GB shall have powers “in consultation with the Working Committee and **the FAMC of the Residents Assembly** to acquire by purchase, lease, gift or otherwise any immovable property which may be necessary or convenient for the purposes of the Foundation.”
- A harmonising interpretation of these two statements (one that seeks to interpret these clauses in a manner that brings consistency to them) is to regard the FAMC as a body that has been created (or “constituted”) by the GB but with primary responsibility to assist and represent the Residents' Assembly. This would mean,

practically, that the Governing Board does not have a right to intervene in decision making powers it has conferred on FAMC.

- Whilst the Secretary convenes the FAMC under the 1997 Rules, that does not confer, without legal explicit authority to the contrary, the right to superimpose her views on the FAMC.

Declaration form update: Although the Working Committee previously assured Auroville residents that the [declaration form](#) being used for issuing of visas and extensions was discontinued (as seen in [this](#) announcement from 24th January), Aurovilians are still being asked to sign it. If you are affected by this, please write to the Working Committee (workingcom@auroville.org.in) and ask them to investigate further.

National Green Tribunal update: The final verdict is still pending. Details of the proceedings have been [posted on Auronet](#).

ATDC communication regarding trees: The ATDC Secretariat has announced new procedures for tree care. On Auronet and in a Mass Bulletin they announced that ‘any tree-planting, tree-transplanting and tree-cutting cannot be done without permission of the ATDC. We have developed special application forms for greeneries in general and specifically for trees’. This leaves many questions unanswered, not least of which is, what mandate does the Town Development Council have to try to direct forestry matters, but for any clarification points please email ATDC (atdc@auroville.org.in), or visit them at their offices in the Town Hall.

Meetings at the Matrimandir gardens: Following several complaints that the Secretary was using the Matrimandir gardens for meetings with people from working groups, the WCom has [issued a statement](#) saying that this has now stopped.

Visual Charts on Auroville’s Organisation. There are some new visual charts explaining the Auroville Foundation structure as envisioned in the Auroville Foundation Act, on the website <https://standforaurovilleunity.com/auroville-organisation/>

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 - you 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.