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Auroville Bulletin 56

**Leave India notice sent to an Aurovilian, Roads update,
Puja held in Darkali ahead of 'imminent tree-felling'**

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

February 17th, 2023

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 needed

- **Volunteers needed for the Endangered Craft Mela.** The Craft Mela team needs help for many different tasks! Please reach out to Pragathi at +91 9920 469 201. More information on the Mela can be found below.
- **BCC calls for support for Aurovilians on bridging maintenances:** 25+ 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 can donate towards legal and delegation fees, please email evolvingalaxy@gmail.com. Please see [here](#) for more information about why further financial assistance is necessary.
- **Help with the AVC room vigil :** Please participate! For nearly 6 months the community has held a 24/7 vigil in the AVC room in Town Hall. **More people are needed** to ensure the round-the-clock presence. Please contact avcouncil@auroville.services, WhatsApp 94430 03617 to sign up. See [here](#) for more information.
- **Join the Wednesdays for Auroville meetings:** There is a weekly community meeting held at the Tibetan Pavilion, every Wednesday 5:00-6:30 pm.

Hot topics

RA WCom member given notice to quit India

RA Working Committee member Maël, who has been serving in the Working Committee since June 2022, has received a 'Leave India' notice. He has been asked to leave the country before the 1st of March. Mael's Letter of Recommendation - which is to be signed by the Secretary - has been pending since October 2022. As

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up against the recent developments have seen their Letter of Recommendations pending - sometimes for many months after visa expiry. As these other individuals have not received a Leave Notice, the current situation could also be a way to target Mael since he is a member of the RA Working Committee and has as such expressed disagreement with some of the methods used by the AVFO and their supporters.

The RA WCom sent out a [massbulletin](#) to inform the community about the Leave Notice. They observed “While we understand that this news may cause emotional upheaval in many, we request everyone to stay calm and join us in calling to the Force of the Mother for guidance in action.”

Road Works - Gaia cycle paths, Crown, and PTDC/SK area

Concrete slabs for road at Youth Centre

The first pieces of the concrete slabs that will make up the Crown Road have arrived at the Youth Centre. It is the first time that the community has seen the slabs and the ‘special design’ for the surface. The slabs will now be put in as the first test stretch, giving Auroville a first glimpse of what is to come for the full 2.1 km Crown Road.



the slabs (mattress for a single bed on the left for size reference)



the surface design

Gaia cycle path work - homes under pressure

On Monday 13th February, the residents of Gaia were confronted with road works on both the front and back access path into the community without prior notice. When asked by a Gaia community member, the ATDC informed them by email that “most of the residences in what is called ‘Gaia’ fall in the ‘Mahalakshmi park’” and that “Residences, houses and or motorised traffic is not appropriate in city parks.” As recently as 2016, an NOC was given for a new house in Gaia following the Master Plan; at the time, there was no question that ‘most’ houses in Gaia would fall within the park. In [a conversation with Satprem](#), Prasad of the AVFO’s ‘ATDC’ indicated that Nicole and Peter’s and Maya’s houses “will have to go”, but as no resident has been officially notified the details remain unclear.

The new cycle path is 2 meters wide, reduced by half a meter due to a newly added brick curb. Four wheelers are now restricted “unless for a medical emergency”. Gaia Forest can no longer easily receive a fire truck in case of a forest fire, an eventuality that was planned for when the original roads were put in.

Additionally, 4-wheeler access is now effectively cut off to the back of CRIPA, the Frisbee Field, and the Ashwagandha Natural Horsemanship Centre, for which regular load carriers of horse feed and compost need access. Glenn, who has stewarded this area for many years, has written [a blog](#) detailing the history of this area and his views on the work being done today. In the back area, the access to Gaia Forest (and thereby, residents’ houses), has been completely dug up and is currently unusable. Residents have also been informed that “fences between houses in the park area will be removed entirely or else reduced to the bare minimum”, while there is no clarity as of yet regarding measures planned to enclose the area.

PTDC paver blocks removed

Residents were taken by surprise on Friday 10th September when the paver blocks in front of the main community cooperative shopping market, PTDC, were suddenly removed. Several residents reported falling from their vehicles or tripping on the uneven ground as the area was not marked in any way. The removed blocks are being used to create a large parking area in front of Solar Kitchen. The new parking area has very little shade, which could make it unsuitable for Auroville's climate during most of the year.

On Wednesday 15th February, the ATDC sent out [an announcement](#) that "The Crown in front of Solar Kitchen and PTDC will be closed off from now till completion in April." Residents were asked to use the "partially completed parking". The parking area is still being worked on and has a substantial layer of fine gravel on the surface with access by sandy slopes making it slippery and unsuitable for use until completion.

Satprem's report - technical issues and tendering

Satprem Maïni, head of the Auroville Earth Institute, has written [his latest report](#) on the Crown Road Works. In it, he details the technical issues with the latest plans for the road, which do not seem to follow any Indian or international guidelines. His report was shared with the Governing Board and other relevant authorities.

Satprem also points out that the tender for the latest iteration of the road was only published on January 12th, 2022 with a deadline of 21st January, while the first precast pieces were delivered on site on 28th January. As any piece of reinforced

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process - if true then this would be a clear legal violation.

Satprem [reported](#) other concerns regarding the Crown Road construction including a waste of GOI funds due to the destruction of 1300m of the old Crown Road despite the pavers having many more years of use.

'Puja' in Darkali and risk of imminent bulldozing

Without prior notice to residents, IAC member Dena Merriam [led a Puja](#) in the Darkali forest for the trees that she stated are "sacrificing themselves" in order for the AVFO and their 'working groups' to complete the Crown road as per their plan. She asked "that their sacrifice may lay the foundation for a beautiful city, a city of the future". She was accompanied by some of the panelists from the Science and Spirituality Summit organized by Dena Merriam at the Unity Pavilion this week.

In a speech at the start of the ceremony, Dena Merriam claimed that the trees in Darkali "were planted knowing that they were in the way of the road and that they would have to be taken down". This is incorrect since the stewards of Darkali planted the area in consultation with Roger Anger and TDCs over the years, planting an alleyway which is now 6 meters away from the new alignment favoured by the AVFO's 'ATDC'. Endangered trees and vital water catchment areas are now threatened. The Darkali community [proposed an alternative pathway](#) last year which, with a reduction in the width of the road, would have remained within the perfect circular alignment of the 30m Crown and would also have protected the natural area. This proposal was rejected by the AVFO and their 'ATDC' without reason.

The RA TDC sent out a [massbulletin](#) regarding the possibility that tree-felling in the Crown area is imminent. They asked that the community "be vigilant, immediately inform in case you see something suspicious, such as fences being opened or JCB in the area of Darkali, Kalabhumi, Arka to SK or entering a forest. **We have to demand that they produce the relevant permissions such as work orders before anything can be cleared. They should not be permitted to go ahead until we have received a public notification that they have permission from the NGT following due process.**"

IAC residents meeting

On 16th February, four members of the IAC - [Dena Merriam](#), [Gabi Gillessen](#), [HP Rama](#) and [Michel Danino](#) met with Auroville residents at the Unity Pavilion. This was the first time that this iteration of the IAC has met with the community. The format of

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how it has unfolded over the past 18 months.

Several Aurovilians urged the IAC members to try to use their position to help unblock the situation with the GB; however, it was clear from the responses given by IAC members Gabi Gillessen and Michel Danino that their attempts to alleviate the situation have been ignored by the Governing Board (GB), who appear to now consider themselves as the 'supreme authority' in Auroville and unwilling to listen to the residents.

One IAC member shared that at their most recent meeting with the GB, the Chairman had expressed the intention to devise and administer a 'Code of Conduct' for Aurovilians, which would seemingly be implemented without any inputs from Aurovilians themselves. It was also noted by an IAC member that the GB consistently refers to Aurovilians as not being able to 'manage themselves', and that while they often speak of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother is almost never mentioned. It became apparent over the course of the evening that the IAC is unable to speak with one voice against the measures that are being taken against Aurovilians, with only Gabi & Michel taking a strong stance against the actions of the AVFO and the GB.

Other topics such as the withholding of visas and the Leave India notice received by WCom member Maël, jobs being taken away without any due process, home eviction emails sent to Aurovilians, and the general air of fear and instability that has been pervasive in the community for the last year, were discussed by a number of the speakers in a calm and eloquent manner.

Rod Hemsell has written [an article](#) which focuses on asking what the GB Chairman could mean when he asks if Aurovilians are willing to "take the Sanatana Dharma to the next level"

New Archives Service

Following the forcible takeover of the Auroville Archives by the AVFO last year, the RA WCom has [announced](#) that a new archives service has been set up to continue the important work of documenting events in Auroville. The hope is that, at a later date, it will be possible to merge the data that is collected by the new service with the data that was taken by the AVFO's group. Therefore, the RA Archives will focus on documenting the current events, so they request that residents "send any new material ... to archives@auroville.services so that it can be properly archived and classified. We are particularly interested in documents, photos, videos, testimonials and other contents that have emerged in the last 18 months".

Other Updates and Information

News & Notes collective letter

[The collective letter](#) to the News & Notes editors requesting that they restore their former policy of publishing notices and announcements from the working groups selected by the Residents' Assembly, or that they step down from their roles, gathered a total of 497 signatures. Due to the current climate of fear, some residents expressed a reluctance to sign the letter, as they feared potential reprisals from the AVFO and their 'working groups' if they shared their names. The letter was shared with the News & Notes editors on 15th February.

Krishna Das concert held at Matrimandir

The Krishna Das concert was held at the Matrimandir on Sunday 13th February. The event attracted about 1500 people and was organised by Dena Merriam of the IAC, AVI USA, and the Auroville Foundation. You can find a video of the event [here](#).

Prior to the event a number of Aurovilians had expressed their dissatisfaction with a large concert held in the Matrimandir. The RA WCom wrote to the Matrimandir Executives to [outline their concerns](#) and request that the concert be held elsewhere. Some members of the AVFO's 'WCom' sent [an email](#) to Dena Merriam and the Secretary after the event, sharing similar concerns. In it, they state that "The performance of Krishna Das at the Matrimandir Amphitheatre was not a suitable choice ... The event attracted thousands of people who did not come for the Mother or Sri Aurobindo or Auroville but for Krishna Das... all those who came knew well they were expected to respect the place and do their dancing at Unity Pavilion. Nothing was respected." Tine and Joseba, however, did not sign the email.

An Aurovilian who attended to witness the event has also shared their report [here](#).

Abri/Ami/Evergreen - land grab update

The case was heard in Tindivanam on Wednesday 15th February but for unknown reasons, the lawyers of the Land Board and Auroville Foundation Office did not

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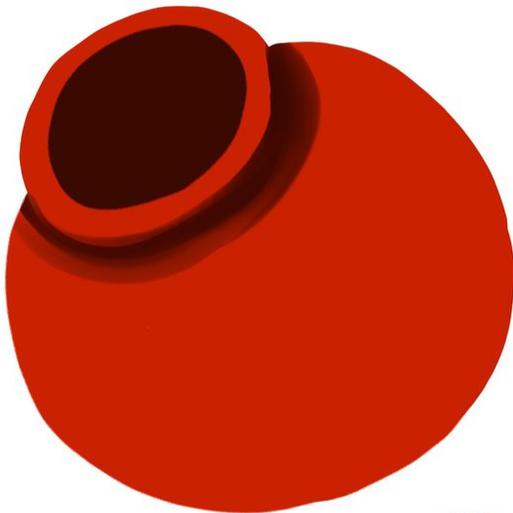
Endangered Craft Mela - volunteers needed

The Endangered Craft Mela is a yearly event organised by the Fertile community that aims to bring together local craftspeople with the children of the Auroville bioregion, and Tamil Nadu. It is scheduled to start this coming Sunday 19th February. The Mela will last until the following Saturday and will end with a Fair. Crafts included this year are macramé, basket-weaving, pottery, silambam stick fighting, upcycling, metal casting, rope making, leatherwork, stone carving, and wood carving, amongst others. Every evening there will be a program with music and dance, open to all.

The Craft Mela team is still looking for help during the mela for tasks such as cooking, organising, cleaning, reception and registration and setting up programs and stalls. Especially Friday 24th and Saturday 25th extra hands are needed. Full-time commitment is not asked, so anybody willing to devote some time - even a few hours - is asked to reach out to Pragathi at +91 9920 469 201.

ENDANGERED CRAFT MELA

A DAY CELEBRATING THE VARIOUS HANDICRAFT SKILLS AND ARTS FOUND IN TAMIL NADU!

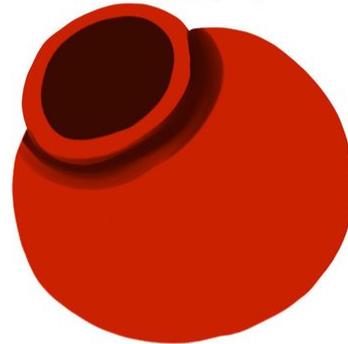


MARKET STALLS OF CRAFTSPEOPLE,
EXHIBITION OF THE CHILDRENS'
PROJECTS, LOCAL FOOD STALLS,
AUROVILLE PRODUCTS, MUSIC AND MORE!
SATURDAY, 25TH FEB. 2023 10AM-10PM
TLC BASE CAMP, DANA ROAD, AUROVILLE



அருகிவரும் கைவினைத் திருவிழா

தமிழ்நாட்டின் பல்வேறு கைவினைத்
திறமைகளையும் கலைகளையும் கொண்டாடும் விழா!



கைவினைஞர்களின் சிறுகதைகள்,
மாணவர்கள் உருவாக்கிய பொருள்களின்
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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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