

Auroville Bulletin 8: A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

3rd March 2022

Recent events update:

- **Governing Board Minutes of 58th Meeting:** The latest Governing Board Minutes (from their 58th Meeting on 18th January) have been released and sent via mass-bulletin. These minutes can also be found [here](#). Among other concerning paragraphs, here are some points for you to consider:
 - On p. 9: “It was decided to establish an Organisation and Governance committee to look into organisation, governance and related matters with the following Governing Board members as committee members ...” This could be perceived as a prelude to the complete takeover of all decision-making bodies in Auroville, whether FAMC, Land Board, Entry group, Auroville Council etc.
 - On p. 10: Points 3, 4, 5 are equally important. Point 4 can be seen as the officialization of the declaration imposed on visa applicants, perhaps in a new form (strangely, it is not annexed to the minutes).
 - To be noted also (p. 5) how the Dreamweaving process now apparently needs a sanction of the Governing Board, but with this condition: “Ongoing works, including the Crown Road will remain unaffected.” And in any case its outcome will merely be an input for ATDC to decide upon. This nullifies the purpose of the whole process.
 - There is no reference made to the meeting that was held between the Governing Board and 6 Aurovilians. A report of this meeting was posted on AuroNet and can be found [here](#).
 - There is also no reference made to the meeting that was held on the 18th of January between the Governing Board and the International Advisory Council. Please write to the Working Committee (workingcom@auroville.org.in) requesting that the minutes of this meeting be also published if available, or else requested to the Auroville Foundation Office.
- **New Outreach Media team welcomes Vikram Ram:** Over the last few years, Vikram Ram (who is not an Aurovillian) has dedicated his time to systematically target and in some cases threaten Aurovilians and Auroville. He has relentlessly used social media and his website to voice his extreme contempt for Auroville as a whole and to propagate only negative and mostly false information with the aim of defamation. His allegations went to the President and Prime Minister of India, Ministries, UNESCO, etc. The previous Governing Board had given Vikram Ram a six-hour hearing, but did not give a chance to any of the Aurovilians he had accused to clarify. The Residents Assembly in a massive meeting of over 750 people, appointed a “Pour Tous Light for All Taskforce” to investigate deeply whether and to

what extent his allegations were true. This Taskforce found that the vast majority of his accusations against Aurovilians were completely false and totally unsubstantiated. His website has periodically been reported and taken down for cyber crimes and has had a detrimental impact on the perception of Auroville. The proclaimed new Outreach Media team appears to include Antim, Muriel and Gino in addition to Joel v.L. and Sindhuja (see [here](#) and [here](#)). They have welcomed Vikram Ram's collaboration, which given his history with Auroville, is very concerning to say the least. On Vikram's Facebook page 'The Auroville Files', he [released a post](#) stating how he had come 'home' to Auroville. This reveals that Vikram Ram is openly collaborating with the 'spokespersons' of the Foundation Office and perhaps others.

- **Update on AV22 Festival:** For the duration of the Auroville week, various event organisers were surprised to find their event posted in the AV22 festival schedule without any consultation, or any AV22 festival organisers reaching out to them to ask if they wished to be included. A particularly strange decision was for the organisers to [include the 'silence festival' in their line up](#), as this was a concept that came about as a response to the events since December, and to the AV22 festival itself. The organisers of the festival, Uma and Lakshay, were repeatedly asked to remove events from the schedule by event organisers who found that they were co-opted into it without their permission, however in some cases these requests were either ignored or met with unpleasant replies.
- **Antim was ceremoniously honoured by the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation:** Throughout the AV22 festival, morning meetings were held at Unity Pavilion between the Secretary, a few Aurovilians, some Working Committee members and Panchayats from Auroville's neighbouring villages. On the last day, however, Venkatesh (Kootroad panchayat president) and Antim were honoured in a ceremony (see [this photo](#)). Some Working Committee members refused to attend this meeting. Kootroad is generally not considered a neighboring village, and both these individuals were very much involved in the bulldozing of the Youth Center and Darkali, and have been recorded on film committing violent acts against Aurovilians. According to one Working Committee member's post on Auronet, this was aimed at 'bringing harmony and honoring bioregion elders and elected local panchayat representatives'. The same person carries on with an invitation to harmonize ourselves first. It is worth asking if the call to 'harmonize ourselves' isn't an entirely empty gesture when an event of the AV22 festival was honouring the very people who committed the acts of violence that have caused so much unresolved and unaddressed trauma to many members of the community.
- **RAD on the Working Committee:** We hope that the RAD on the Working Committee (WCom) membership and a call for a new WCom will be taken up next by the Residents' Assembly Service, given the situation our current WCom members are in. It is essential that we have a WCom that 'assists' and 'represents' the Residents' Assembly, as specified in the WCom mandate and the Auroville Foundation Act. This implies first and foremost to respect decisions of the Residents' Assembly. If the RAD process on the WCom is taken up next, it will need a team of committed individuals to hold the process and present on stage.

Occasional assistance will also be needed to take care of logistics, help prepare the venue for the meetings, etc. Please write to dec2021rads@auroville.org.in if you are willing to help.

- **RAS letter to 4 WCom Members:** The RAS this week replied directly to 4 Working Committee members Anu, Arun, Partha and Srimoyi. These were the members that wrote letters to the Secretary and the Governing Board which misrepresented the RA and the most recent RAD process and outcome. You can read the letter from the RAS [here](#).
- **Update on RRO visits:** The Working Committee has posted [an announcement on Auronet](#) on the 2nd of March, to update the community on the RRO visits. According to this announcement, the RRO “did not disclose the source of the complaint” made against some residents, and the Foundation Office has apparently stated verbally and informally that “the Auroville Foundation was not involved in submitting names to the RRO”. This statement should be sought formally in writing, before it can be considered reliable.
- **Articles in ‘The Print’:** Earlier this month, The Print ran an [article](#) that contained a number of inaccuracies, including the bizarre claim that local villagers must undergo ‘spirituality tests [which] resemble the UK’s famous virginity tests for immigrants’ in order to join Auroville. This week saw a [second article](#) published which countered the many incorrect claims.
- **Dr Karan Singh’s message:** This week, Dr Karan Singh sent [a second message](#) to the community, a message that contrasted strongly with [the first](#) which was sent in December. Amongst other points and suggestions, he stated that ‘means are as important as ends’, and that visas for foreigners should not be ‘disturbed’.

Action needed:

- **New writer(s) for the Auroville Bulletin:** If you have writing skills and would like to help us write the Auroville Bulletin, please come forward by responding to this email. We are looking for one to two people that could join our team, and who have writing skills, an ability to keep a neutral tone and to fact-check information (if and when needed).
- **RAD on the Working Committee:** Please see above for more details but if the RAD process on the WCom is taken up next, it will need a team of committed individuals to hold the process, present on stage, etc. Occasional assistance will also be needed. Please write to dec2021rads@auroville.org.in if you are willing to help.
- **Write to the Working Committee:** You may consider writing to the Working Committee, asking:

- For minutes of the meeting held between the International Advisory Council and the Governing Board on the 18th of January.
- For a follow-up on RRO visits, and a request to the Foundation Office for a written statement on the same.

Please see above for more information on both these points.

- **Survey on setting collective priorities for our funds:** We encourage all of you to fill in the BCC (Auroville Budget Coordination Committee) survey and help define our collective priorities for our collective funds! As you may or may not know, lots of Auroville services are funded through this budget - from schools to the health centres to farms. And the BCC wants to understand what sectors are most important to us as a community, if there are any missing services in our community, and how we feel about our sources of funding... See all the info you need to participate in the survey (**by March 7th**) [at this link](#), and on the website budget.auroville.org.in. You can participate in the survey [here](#).

Changing the narrative:

- In recent months it has been stated many times that a number of Aurovilians, particularly foresters, are behaving like 'land-grabbers' and 'landlords' because they steward large pieces of land. Laid out here are a number of reasons why this narrative is largely false.
 - Many stewards, in the forest and elsewhere, have invested a huge amount of their own personal finances buying land for Auroville and investing in planting, growing and maintaining the forest. To date, the Government of India has not given any funding for land in Auroville.
 - Lands that are designated for green work are divided into farms or forests depending on the health of the soil; forest land is given to people dedicated to forest work and rejuvenating degraded soil through forestation. Farms and forests work in harmony, and only through rejuvenation of the land through reforestation can we then have farms at a later stage.
 - Often, when stewards were given large pieces of land to look after, it was to protect against encroachment. This remains a huge issue today, but was even more important in the past when Auroville was not so well established and there were fewer Aurovilians.
 - Stewards are safekeeping/caring for the land for all of humanity and for Auroville to grow, it is not their personal land. In the case of many foreign and local Aurovilians, they have given up everything to devote their lives to Auroville. The idea that people are 'landgrabbing' has never been raised in

the past 54 years, why is it suddenly being presented as a problem now, unless the aim is to create division?

- Most stewards are making a loss not a profit from tending the forest, but keep at it because their aim is not to make money but create a healthy living environment for Auroville and its neighbourhood.
- Stewards of forested lands often section out the land into the home and homestead area (around the home) which is a small portion of the area. The rest of the forest remains as sanctuary areas (no biomass extracted) and managed forest (forest that is tended to regularly). Homesteads are a minor proportion of the sanctuary and managed forest of these lands.
- Forests are not massive estates, but in fact work areas. We would not call someone tending to a farm that they are massive landlords of all that farm land. They may have a house and the land around it is the land they work on. It is a similar situation with forest, people live in houses and the surrounding area is where they work.

Recent news articles:

- *“Counterview: Urging Centre to take over Auroville a call for serious overreach of State power”*, by Ashish Kothari, published on 26th February 2022 in The Print: <https://theprint.in/opinion/counterview-urging-centre-to-take-over-auroville-a-call-for-serious-overreach-of-state-power/848254/>
- *“Auroville’s Crown of Thorns”*, by Dinesh Varma, published on 26th February 2022 in The Hindu: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/aurovilles-crown-of-thorns/article65087021.ece>

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 - you are welcome to write to evolvingalaxy@gmail.com.

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.