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Auroville Bulletin 80

Vote in the latest ERAD, Legal update and Update on land exchanges

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Saturday, 8th March 2024

Please find a glossary of acronyms and terms used in this bulletin [here](#).

How can you help?

- **URGENT - Support for Maintenances:** The funds collected to support individuals cut off from their maintenances are quickly running out and more help is needed. For more information, please contact the BCC: bccoffice@auroville.services. If you wish to support the Farm or Forest Group, please contact these groups via evolvingalaxy@gmail.com for more information.
- **Assist with documenting tree-cutting and clearing:** In light of the recent Stay Order placed on the NGT verdict it is particularly important to continue with documentation of tree cutting and land clearing. If you are available and willing to help with documentation, please get in touch with tdc@auroville.services.
- **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:** For over 20 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 4:30-6:00 pm.
- **Share information confidentially with the RA WCom via email workingcom@auroville.services.** The RA WCom is collecting information regarding the various interactions with the AVFO and their appointees. This information is necessary in order to protect the RA and will remain strictly confidential.

What is happening now

ERAD on Emergency Functions and RA FAMC

The latest Emergency Residents' Assembly Decision-making process (ERAD) is running until Sunday 10th March. Please see [here](#) for the resolution in [English](#), [Tamil](#), [French](#), [Italian](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#) and [Russian](#).

Important note:

If you signed the petition to initiate the ERAD, **YOU STILL NEED TO VOTE**, so please make sure you submit your decision online or in person.

The Residents' Assembly (RA), as a statutory body of the Foundation, has always appointed the Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) since its creation, until 01.06.2022 when a parallel FAMC was [appointed by the Governing Board \(GB\)](#).

Given the current situation, the RA has been unable to guide and manage the funds raised and contributed by members of the RA and the assets created and managed by members of the RA. This has resulted in the inability of the RA to manage its daily activities and to plan its future economic vision.

The [emergency functions granted to the WCom by the RA resolution](#) dated 14.08.2023 have expired.

It is essential for the WCom to have these functions extended for a period of 6 months, so that it can continue to function effectively given the ongoing crisis.

Use your personalized voting link sent by the Residents' Assembly Service (RAS). If you didn't receive the link, please check spam or promotions folders. If still not there, kindly visit RAS polling stations.

If you prefer to register your decision in person, please visit the RAS polling stations:

SATURDAY (March 9th) @ Solar Kitchen: 3 pm - 5 pm

SUNDAY (March 10th) @ Solar Kitchen: 11 am - 1 pm

Confidentiality is guaranteed: your name and vote will be kept a secret.

Legal update

As mentioned in the [previous issue](#) of the Bulletin, three cases were admitted at the Madras High Court in January 2024, challenging the Governing Board (GB)'s new set of Regulations for Admission & Terminations, and for the Selection of the Working Committee. The matter was heard [on 9th February](#), [on 15th February](#), and finally [on 23rd February](#) the judge passed an interim stay on these new sets of regulations. The [court orders](#) were shared by the RA Wcom on 2nd March. These orders mean that the new GB Regulations cannot be applied in the interim and that their validity will depend on the final judgement by the Court. The final hearing is scheduled for the 25th of March.

On 21st February the RA WCom and the Entry Board sent out a joint [massbulletin](#) which stated that "The Entry Board was selected by the community to do a certain work and it intends to do it until the Residents' Assembly asks them to stop, or otherwise instructed by the courts." On 8th March, the AVFO 'WCom' sent a [massbulletin](#) which said "At the present moment, the Entry Service is not functioning due to a Stay Order from the Madras High Court".

In parallel, the case challenging the legitimacy of the AVFO 'ATDC' was heard [on 8th February](#), [on 15th February](#) and [on 23rd February](#). According to a massbulletin by the RA WCom, "The matter about the appeal ... relating to TDC, was completed during previous hearings and it is now reserved for judgment."

Other cases related to the Working Committee "could not be discussed [on 23rd January] and will be posted on a later date". This includes the 'quo warranto' case, in which members of the AVFO 'WCom' have to prove that they are legitimate representatives of the RA, for which a hearing is scheduled on 11th March.

The AVFO's Supreme Court appeal on the NGT judgement was scheduled on 28th February and then adjourned to the next day. The case was still not heard on 29th and the next hearing date is yet to be announced.

Finally in the PKS/ Evergreen case, the court appointed surveyors completed the survey of the area and the court case in Tindivanam is due to go ahead on the 13th March.

In the meantime around 2 am on February 29th and March 8th PKS surreptitiously dropped building materials (gravel) inside Evergreen. The matter has been reported to the AVFO 'LBoard' and the AVFO.

Land Exchange updates

AuroOrchard:

In November 2023, 10 acres of AuroOrchard was exchanged without consultation or informing the residents. This land included important assets, a home, cow shed, well and water supply lines and the exchange jeopardized the productivity of the entire farm. Despite repeated assurances from the AVFO and their 'working groups' that no assets would be included, this has proved to be false. In December 2023 another 2.5 acres was carved out of the farm in exchange for a small parcel of land and building, AuroOceanic resort, in the city area. The AuroOceanic building itself does not have the pre-required permits for construction.

Tollbooth land (Murthy stonecarver located near AuroOrchard):

Land exchanged in October 2022 at the tollbooth has now been resold for 5.33 times higher than it was exchanged for by the AVFO, meaning yet another financial loss for Auroville due to land exchange. As per the General Finance Rules (GFR) 2017, which apply to autonomous bodies such as the Auroville Foundation, permission has to be sought from the Ministry of Finance in order to make any sales or exchanges. Through an RTI response received in May 2023, the Ministry of Finance claimed it had not received a request for permission of sale, exchange, lease or disposal from the Auroville Foundation between July 2021 to May 2023. This is another example showing that recent land exchanges by the AVFO are not following some of the many legal protocols imposed by the Government of India.

RTI - CIC expresses “severe displeasure”

A Right to Information (RTI) was filed in 2022 seeking information about the Auroville Foundation making payments towards their legal firm Nityaesh and Vaibhav Advocates and Advisors. The RTI asked how the Auroville Foundation was filing these payments in their accounts and if there were any family relations to the legal firm and the Secretary. Despite over 2 years passing, no information has been provided by the AVFO to the “severe displeasure” of the Central Information Commission (CIC). A second appeal of this RTI has been filed requesting the information to be provided by the AVFO in a timely manner. Please see [here](#) for a summary of the CIC decisions.

RA TDC report regarding Supreme Court Appeal

On the 21st February 2024, The RA TDC released “an extensive non-exhaustive [report](#) on numerous large-scale developments currently being undertaken in the Auroville project area” which was shared with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as well as the RA, GB and the IAC. The report highlighted the damage that has been caused to Auroville’s biodiversity and ecosystems in the past two years of development, the violations of the NGT order as well as the large-scale impact of the lifting of the NGT stay order in December 2023. The RA TDC also predicted a significant future environmental impact for Auroville and the local bioregion, should the NGT order of April 2022 be annulled by the Supreme Court.

You can read the full [report here](#).

Bharat Nivas AVFO meetings

On 5th February 2024, the AVFO Officer on Special Duty, V. Srinivasaragavan, sent out a meeting [invitation](#) to all Auroville residents registered on the RoR, on behalf of the Office of the Secretary. It was described as a “platform for Residents of the Auroville Community to participate, to express their wish to work any area of activity, any concerns, inputs, and suggestions, etc.”. Residents were invited to one meeting on either the 7th, 8th, or 9th of February. In the days leading up to the event, some community members received telephone calls from the AVFO Wcom “advising them to attend” the meeting. Many felt pressured to attend, and feared the consequences if they did not. Names and details of attendees were recorded.

Reports from attendees said that the Bharat Nivas hall was rather full, however the official number of Aurovilian attendees has not been published by the AVFO. At the meeting, the AVFO WCom and other groups formed by the Governing Board gave presentations followed by some permitted questions from the audience.

In response to this meeting being called with the purpose of “participation”, a group of concerned residents shared an [open letter](#) with the AVFO and the community pointing out the “one-way communication” and “over reach” of the AVFO failing to foster trust and collaboration. The letter adds “We look forward to the time when respect and mutuality between the pillars of Auroville will be duly restored, and a truthful and trusting collaboration becomes possible once again.”

‘Community Coordinators’ meeting with RN Ravi

A select group of Aurovilians were invited to a meeting with the Chairman of the GB, RN Ravi, on Golden Day, 29th February 2024. Many of those invited were designated as 'community coordinators' by the AVFO 'WCom'. The [email invitation](#) indicated that there would be a chance to interact with the Chairman. However the structure of the meeting that went ahead was very different to that which was originally shared. The main focus of the meeting was a prize-giving ceremony for an AVFO literature competition, additionally there were brief speeches from the Chairman and the Secretary and short presentations - which held no new information - by the AVFO 'Working Groups'.

This is only the second time the current Chairman has offered to meet with the community and at the first meeting, held in November 2022, there was no opportunity to ask questions; instead community members were invited to email proposals to the Chairman, but none of these emails were replied to. Many of the letters sent to the Chairman were collated into a book called "[The Spirit of Auroville](#)"

RA WCom GB meeting Observations

On 12th February, the RA WCom [published](#) its observations on the minutes of the [63rd](#), [64th](#) and [65th](#) Governing Board (GB) meetings. This was accompanied by [general observations](#) on the Governing Board's modus operandi and Auroville's current situation, legal advice given by senior lawyer Shri Soli Sorabjee in 2008.

In the meantime, the Governing Board held its 66th meeting, the [minutes](#) of which were recently circulated. Comments on these 66th GB meeting minutes will be released soon, and included in an upcoming issue of the Bulletin.

Kalabhumi Borewell update

The Kalabhumi community was connected to the main Auroville water tank by the Auroville Water Service (AWS) at the end of December 2023 without consent from the borewell users. Ignoring a [legal notice](#), construction activities commenced around the borewell on 5th February by the CPWD. Despite verbal assurances from AWS of engaging hydrological experts, the only measure taken involves covering the top of the 21m deep well with a simple PVC cap. The requisite standard for borewell closure can be found [here](#). CPWD engineers on-site have stated they have no orders or intention to actually close the borewell, leaving the responsibility to the residents. The CPWD was recently [informed](#) by the RA TDC again about the need to seal the borewell to avoid the passage breaking at the first hint of rain and subsequent inevitable aquifer contamination. Failure to adequately seal the borewell poses a risk of structural collapse and aquifer contamination, impacting water supply not only to Auroville but also neighbouring communities and the broader bioregion. All [warnings](#) have been ignored. Additionally, AWS is now requesting the community pays for their services, including connection fees and meters.

Other Updates and Information

Help needed for AV Council room vigil

Members of the 24/7 vigil [protecting the AV Council](#) (issue 26) town hall meeting room since July 2022 have appealed for more assistance. Several shifts need to be filled during the week (different times of the day, or sleep-over). With the hot season approaching, many Aurovilians will be travelling, putting more pressure on those who take turns to keep this important community hub safe. Many regular watchers use their time in the space for exercising, meditating, quiet study, meeting friends, getting an (automatic) back massage or working online.

Contact (DM) for timings: 97877 97814 or 94430 03617 (for AVCouncil).

AVFO 'HR' communicates further maintenance cuts

At the end of February 2024, a number of Aurovilians received an [email](#) from Kaliananda, as the AVFO 'BCC' Human Resource person, stating that their maintenance would be cut in a matter of days, starting 1st March. This follow up comes after the AVFO BCC asked residents to speak to Kaliananda to have their work "realigned" in December 2023. It is expected that these maintenance cuts will affect hundreds of Aurovilians who depend on City Service maintenance for their livelihood in Auroville.

AVFO 'BCC' demands for City Services contributions

Aurovilians are continuing to receive [demands for payment](#) of the City Services (CS) contribution from the AVFO 'BCC'. In many cases, the amounts asked for amount to tens of thousands of rupees and they are often being sent to community members while they are out of station or they have had an agreed waiver in the past. This approach to receiving CS contributions is a marked change from the past, as was highlighted by the RA BCC in their [report](#) from April 2023. In the past, it had been the case that "contributions (were) waived because the individuals are working for free, or previously made large donations to Auroville (and are now aged), or are between jobs and without resources. The current approach seems to be to administer the individual contributions as a tax".

Cripa funding cut

At the beginning of February 2024, Cripa received an [email](#) from the AVFO 'BCC' informing them that their funding would likely be reduced to partial or zero support from 1st April 2024. The email stated that "BCC would recommend you to initiate an effort in the direction of making your Unit Self-sufficient from the next financial year." This move gives CRIPA less than two months to become self-sufficient, ie raise their own funds or start charging for access instead of providing an open community space for the arts.. Located in the Cultural Zone, Cripa has provided a free-to-use space for performing artists since 2010.

Talam ceasing to support key software

Talam, who have been providing key software support for a large number of Auroville's online services, [announced](#) that they will be ceasing to support certain software from 1st April 2024. They shared that they had been continuing to provide support despite the fact that this work was supposed to be taken over some time ago by the AVFO-formed group Auroville Integrated Information Service (AIIS). The announcement stated "the designated receiving team, AIIS, has not actively pursued taking over these projects. In light of this, it has become increasingly challenging for us to maintain and support these projects, given that we were explicitly instructed to cease development and hand them over". Affected services include AVFO 'FAMC' and 'BCC' dashboards, Guest Registration Service and the Matrimandir booking portal. The formation of AIIS was originally [announced](#) in the 60th GB meeting minutes dated 12th July 2022.

Visitors Centre 'tourist walk' to Matrimandir

Since the Visitors Centre (VC) was taken over by the AVFO, the walk from the VC to the Matrimandir (MM) viewing point has changed dramatically. Whereas previously, the walk was directly from VC to MM, via a shaded route with painted stones showing the names of the Mother's Qualities, now visitors are directed through Bharat Nivas. One Aurovillian who took the walk recently noted the walk now resembles something akin to an "amusement park", with cartoonists offering caricature paintings, snack stalls, market stalls selling cheap items and a 'Wildlife Museum' - entry 30rs - with life sized sculptures of animals such as apes and elephants. Entry into the Kalakendra Art Gallery and the India Space now costs 50 rs. It is not clear if or how any of these entities are making a financial contribution to Auroville. You can read the full report [here](#) (originally appeared in the Community [News and Notes issue 1010](#)).



Miscellaneous news

- **Aadhaar deactivated letters:** In recent weeks a few Aurovilians received letters from the [UIDIA](#) saying that their Aadhar cards had been deactivated. Initially there were concerns that that this was related to the AVFO targeting of visas. However, as was highlighted by the RA WCom in their [massbulletin](#) on the topic, this is seemingly a [nationwide issue](#) and not just limited to Aurovilians. If you have received such a letter please contact workingcom@auroville.services.
- **Darkali's water bodies under threat:** On 8th February 2024, large amounts of soil were brought from the Matrimandir gardens to Darkali, presumably for the purpose of filling in the water bodies to allow the continued building of the Crown Road. Please see [here](#) for an album of photos and video of the event.
- **RA WCom Membership:** The RA WCom [announced](#) on 19th February 2024 that Hemant would be stepping down from the committee with immediate effect, citing personal reasons.
- **Marathon posters** This year during the Auroville Marathon, [posters](#) hung advertising the marathon marked an unprecedented shift in both the aesthetics and content of previous signage for the event. In the day leading up to the marathon numerous posters of the Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ma Subramaniam were hung around Auroville.
- **MoU Signing:** On February 27th 2024, AVFO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indira Gandhi National Centre of the Arts (IGNCA). The [stated aim of the MoU](#) is to “foster cross-cultural understanding and promote artistic exchanges”; The details of the MoU have not been shared with the community. In several [reports](#) of the event, Auroville was referred to as “The Auroville Ashram”
- **Internet cables cut again:** Residents in the City area have again experienced lengthy internet outages due to the cables being cut by the CPWD whilst carrying out the Crown Road works. On AuroNet, Aurinoco [stated](#) that they have shared all the relevant information such as cable maps and “the rest lies with CPWD, FO and ATDC ... to do the needful... or not as of now”.

Media & Other Links

- **Issue 5 of Voice of Auroville:** The 5th issue of Voice of Auroville is available at [this link](#); previous issues are available [here](#).
- **bnnbreaking.com:** [Madras High Court halts changes to Auroville Register of Residents](#)
- **The Hindu:** [Don't add or delete names from Auroville Register of Residents](#)
- **Deccan Herald:** [Auroville: Beacon of Unity and Sustainable Development](#)
- **atmos.earth:** [Life inside Auroville, The City the Earth Needs](#)
- **scroll.in:** [A new book details to 50 year afforestation project of the coromandel coast of South India](#)
- **meer.com:** [The Auroville Experiment](#)
- **Times of India:** [It's demanding, but so much fun](#)
- **Youthkiawaaz:** [Embarking on a Journey of Learning and Growth in Auroville](#)

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

If you wish to know more, the websites <https://auroville.media/> and <https://standforauroville.org/> contain a great deal of information on the current situation.

Please note that our previous bulletins can be found at this link: <https://linktr.ee/evolvinggalaxy>

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. Also feel free to share with us information, questions or suggestions.

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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