

View this email in your browser



## **Auroville Bulletin 89**

### **67th Governing Board meeting minutes, AVFO appoints 'ATSC' and Legal update**

A Summary of Events Happening in Auroville Today

Friday, 14th March 2025

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

## **How can you help?**

There are many ways to help support the community at this time. Here are some possibilities. If you have any skills you would like to offer, or have questions on how you can get involved, feel free to contact [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com) or the related email below. Thank you!

## Financial assistance

- **Support for Maintenances:** Please support individuals cut off from their maintenances by the AVFO working groups. For more information, please contact the BCC: [bccoffice@auroville.services](mailto:bccoffice@auroville.services). If you wish to support the Farm or Forest Group as a whole, please contact these groups via [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com).
- **Support for legal fees:** Please donate towards legal and delegation fees by emailing [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com). Please see [here](#) for more information about why financial assistance is necessary.
- **Support the RA News and Notes:** The RA News and Notes needs financial support to continue functioning please consider making a donation to Financial Service account number #252150. To read all issues and subscribe, [click here](#).

## Hands on help

- **Documentation work:** In light of the 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 [evolvingalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvingalaxy@gmail.com).
- **Keeping vigil in the AV Council room:** For over 2.5 years 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](mailto:avcouncil@auroville.services), WhatsApp 94430 03617 to sign up. See [here](#) for more information.
- **Share information confidentially with the RA WCom via email [workingcom@auroville.services](mailto: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

## 67th GB Meeting Minutes

The 67th Governing Board (GB) [minutes](#) for the 31st May 2024 meeting were obtained through a Right to Information (RTI) request in January 2025, and only published on the Auroville Foundation website in February 2025. The GB continues to operate without transparency, failing to publish their minutes in a timely fashion, and making unilateral decisions without consulting the RA. The RA WCom released a [set of observations](#) which they shared with the GB, IAC and the Auroville community.

### **Key concerns from the RA WCom observations:**

- The GB continues to bypass consultation with the Residents' Assembly and the International Advisory Council, despite requirements to do so in the Auroville Foundation Act.
- The GB has approved making changes to the Auroville Foundation Act 1988, noting that the “Additional Solicitor General of India has given his opinion on amendments to certain sections of the Act and Rules to remove ambiguity in the statutory provisions to facilitate a strong administration in Auroville.” This raises concerns that the GB intends to take statutory powers away from the RA and the IAC.
- The GB approved transferring Financial Service (FS) operations to external banks (please see below for more information).
- The GB granted the Secretary permission to sell or exchange lands outside the city area for lands within the city area, raising concerns about proper valuation and processes.
- Three new Deputy Secretary posts were approved despite ongoing budget cuts to services and maintenance for residents.

### **Some Financial Service (FS) functions to be transferred to external banks**

The 67th GB meeting [minutes](#) approved the transfer of the functions of FS to external banks. On 2nd March 2025, an [announcement](#) was sent out by the AVFO Accounts Officer stating that they would now be implementing this transition of operations. The impact on individuals will be that the portion of their maintenance paid ‘in kind’ (i.e. can only be spent inside Auroville) will remain in their FS account while the cash portion above a certain amount (not yet clarified) will be transferred to their bank account. Units will now have to run all income, expenses and other funds through FS, all unit bank accounts will have to be closed and transitioned to one common bank account with sub accounts. Any other implications are not yet clear.

The announcement requests “All individual Aurovilians to have bank accounts opened by 31st March 2025” The announcement also mentioned that ATMs would be set up inside Auroville for “Auroville to provide cash liquidity wherever needed to Aurovilians or others”, which is a contradiction to the aspiration of a cashless society and may also increase unwanted traffic inside Auroville.

# **AVFO appoints 'Admissions and Terminations Scrutinising Committee'**

On 20th February 2025, the AVFO issued an order constituting an 'Admissions and Terminations Scrutinising Committee' (AVFO 'ATSC'). The committee consists of five members: four residents - Antim Singhi, Muriel Ghion, Egle Borchardt, and Ram Narayana Patro - along with Mr. Balasubramanian representing the AVFO.

This appointment follows the Admission and Termination Regulations gazetted by the AVFO on 4th January 2024, which were legally challenged in court. On 23rd February 2024, the Madras High Court issued a stay order on these regulations, stating that they "erode upon the power of the RA to allow admissions or cause the termination of persons in the register [of residents] as enshrined in Section 19 of the Auroville Foundation Act." The court order stated that "the admission or termination of a person in the register of residents of the Auroville foundation shall not be finalized; nor a person shall be admitted or terminated from the register of residents resorting to the impugned regulation."

Despite this stay order, the AVFO 'ATSC' recently reopened the Entry Office in Town Hall and the AVFO 'WCom' have been holding weekly mandatory sessions for newcomers and volunteers.

The AVFO maintains that they are not in contempt of court as they are not finalizing any entries to or removals from the Register of Residents (RoR). However, a [legal opinion](#) shared by the RA WCom indicates that since the 2023 Regulations are stayed in their entirety and the 2020 Regulations have not been repealed, the 2020 Regulations remain valid and the Entry Board selected by the Residents' Assembly can continue to function until a final verdict is reached. Despite this, the RA Entry Board has not been given access to their office while the court case is ongoing. The RA WCom sent out a [massbulletin](#) stating that the "ATSC & ATR have no legal validity", pointing out that both groups are included in the 2023 Admissions and Terminations regulations that have been stayed by the Madras High Court, therefore they do not have any legal validity and their formation is "bordering on contempt of court".

### **Akira's Story**

Cheshta Bhatia (Akira) is an aspiring Newcomer who has been volunteering in Auroville since November 2023. On 10th February 2025, she received an email from SAVI terminating her status as an Auroville volunteer with immediate effect. The email stated that "the Auroville Foundation Working Committee advised us to terminate your volunteer status with immediate effect following multiple complaints regarding your conduct". Despite attempts by Akira to discover the nature of the complaints and to be allowed a right to reply, SAVI has not provided any details of the complaints, claiming confidentiality of the parties involved. However, Akira was present at Town Hall on 3rd February when residents confronted some of the AVFO 'Working Group' members, and her notice from SAVI came just one week later.

SAVI went on to say that she had violated guidelines by setting up an "an independent WhatsApp group to influence volunteers in a way deemed politically motivated", and stated that "Auroville [is] a place of research and human unity [and] it is also a structured community with regulations that ensure harmony and a shared purpose among its members and volunteers". Akira asked SAVI to provide the specific policy and framework that SAVI and the AVFO 'WCom' were following but they have not responded to this so far.

# Legal updates

## Madras High Court dismisses petitions against land exchanges

On 4th March 2025, the Madras High Court delivered its [judgment](#) on two writ petitions filed by an Aurovilian. The petitions had sought to prevent the AVF from proceeding with land exchanges without following procedures laid down in the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997 and the General Financial Rules 2017.

The court dismissed the petitions, making a clear distinction between "sale" and "exchange" of property. The judgment states that prior sanction from the Government of India is only required for sale of immovable property, and not for exchange.

Notably, the court accepted the AVF's claim that consultation with the Working Committee and the FAMC had occurred, without independent verification. The judgment stated that "a specific averment has been made in the counter that such consultation was done" and noted that neither the [AVFO] Working Committee nor FAMC had complained to the court about lack of consultation. This appears to overlook that the validity of these groups is contested and also that a member of the AVFO 'WCom' has previously [posted on Auronet](#) stating that there has been no consultation in recent land exchanges between the AVFO Land Officer/Land Service and the AVFO 'WCom' (please see [Bulletin 85](#) for more details).

Similarly, the court acknowledged but did not independently verify the claim that "the Foundation has received 240 acres more than its exchange value of nearly 70 lakhs more than the value of the land provided." This claim stands in contrast to documented concerns about significant undervaluation of exchanged Auroville lands, particularly in cases like Auro Orchard.

The AVFO 'Legal Coordinator' (Sindhuja Jagadeesh) published an [article](#) on Auronet stating that "Auroville welcomes this judgment, which validates its efforts toward the further development of the Auroville City," presenting the court's acceptance of these contested points as complete validation of all aspects of their land exchange practices.

However, a blog post by Jothi Charles titled "[Act/Rule applies for land sale, not exchange: Madras HC](#)" presents a different perspective, arguing that the court's ruling focused primarily on technical distinctions rather than examining the substantive impacts of these exchanges on Auroville's assets and functioning.

## Other legal matters

On 15th February 2025, the RA WCom shared an [update](#) on other ongoing legal activities, including:

1. An appeal on the Quo Warranto order of 1st August 2024 concerning the membership of the Working Committee was accepted by the Madras High Court for debate on 4th February 2025.
2. The Supreme Court hearings on the AVFO's appeals against both the NGT judgment of April 2022 and the Madras High Court order on TDC matters (issued in March 2024) have concluded. The arguments in both cases are now closed and reserved for judgment.

## AuroOrchard update

Since 10 acres of Auro Orchard land were exchanged by the AVFO in November 2023, residents and workers have been facing increasing difficulties in accessing farming infrastructure and housing. Despite initial assurances from the AVFO that the farm and residents would not be affected by the land exchange, the reality has been very different to what was promised. The land that has been exchanged included the farm entrance and an internal road, the principal borewell, tank and irrigation system, electrical connections, the cow sheds, several godowns, the iconic ancient banyan tree, and also access to one of the houses, stewarded by two Aurovilians, Aravinda & Jasmin.

On 18th February 2025, workers came with a JCB and instructions to dig a trench and start laying the foundations for a wall which would completely cut the house off from the farm and leave it inaccessible, also preventing the house from being moved in the future. The work on the wall is continuing and no viable solution has been offered from the AVFO to replace the lost infrastructure, nor have they responded to multiple urgent calls from the farm to assist and intervene.



# Other Updates and Information

## Road construction and tree cutting update

### Transplanting trees & widening the ORR

In several places in Auroville, including alongside the new section of [Outer Ring Road](#) (ORR) past Aurovelo and also near the [Visitors Centre](#), the AVFO 'ATDC' have recently 'transplanted' a number of protected palmyra trees, some of which are likely to be over 100 years old. As with [previous tree transplantations](#) by the AVFO, little care was taken to properly move the trees and ensure their survival, and on-ground visits to the transplantation area reveal that nearly none of the transplanted trees have survived. As reported in [Bulletin 88](#), the AVFO 'ATDC' are now widening the ORR, reportedly to 30m (it is currently 6m wide), and so a large number of trees have been cut in recent weeks.

### Bark-stripping near African Pavilion

Further damage to Auroville's environment was carried out at African Pavilion, where work trees were stripped of their bark, a practice known as 'girdling', which is carried out with the intention of killing the trees.



This work was carried out by the AVFO 'Green Belt Services (GBS)', the group that was [formed by the AVFO](#) to replace the Farm and Forest Groups. The Executives of the 'GBS' are three Aurovilian foresters - Aviram (Sadhana Forest), Saravnanan (Aranya Forest) and Sivaraj (Martuvam Healing Forest), however their actions are being carried out without consulting any other foresters in Auroville. An Aurovilian has written to the Executives of the 'GBS' to plead with them to reconsider their actions, you can find their letter [here](#).

The trees appear to have been damaged to make way for a [new walking path](#) that cuts directly from the Visitors Centre (VC) to the Matrimandir (MM). The [application announcement](#) states "The original plan had always been to cut a straight line from Visitors' Centre to the Viewing Point, but at that time it could not be executed due to some local resistance from Residents... The proposal is that this original connection that simplifies and shortens the trajectory [sic]... allowing them to walk a shorter and shaded path". Before the [AVFO takeover](#) of the Visitors Centre in April 2023, there was already a short, shaded path (now shown on the map above as an 'existing foot/cycle path') from the VC to MM but the new VC executives moved the route so that visitors were directed through Bharat Nivas, past market stalls and other tourist-focussed attractions.

### **RA TDC letter to officials reg Extensive Tree Abuses**

The RA TDC sent a letter titled '[Extensive Tree Abuses](#)' to several Tamil Nadu state and central government officials, as well as the GB and the IAC. As well as the damage mentioned above, they highlight that "Given the volume of felled trees in Auroville, the total worth of the lost timber is significant. Questions remain about whether the proceeds have been properly accounted for, or if financial mismanagement has occurred". This is particularly concerning given the high value of some of the trees that have been cut, which include protected species such as Red Sanders. A [new tender](#) for "dried, fallen, pruned/cut tree branches as firewood" was recently released by the AVFO, which may be related to the [large store of cut trees](#) that is located opposite Citadines.

### **More tree cutting for the MM hill**

[More trees](#) were also cut near Nine Palms recently, apparently so that trucks can pass through carrying soil from the MM to the site of the new hill that is being created at Fertile Field.



## **New photo report on tree cutting**

A new photo report documenting the latest tree cutting across Auroville has also been shared. Please find a link to the report [here](#).

## **Update on Revelation Forest Sanctuary**

On 3rd March 2025, workers and JCBs returned to Revelation Forest to break the fence and continue the road works for Radial 1. If this work is completed it will cause further damage to the forest sanctuary as well as leading to the demolition of a house that is currently occupied by an Aurovilian. The radial that is planned is entirely unnecessary at this stage as it will not link to any other roads because Auroville does not own the necessary land. The workers were stopped again by members of the Revelation management team. This action led to one of the management team members being threatened with arrest by the Police. It is important to note that this radial is not marked on the gazetted Master Plan and has been added arbitrarily by the AVFO 'ATDC'.



## **Secretary meets with residents**

On 27th February 2025, at the invitation of Mr. Koshy Varghese, a group of seven residents (Alain B, Christine, Fred, Matthieu, Sauro, Tom and Valli) met with the Secretary, the OSD Dr. Seetharaman, and the consultant for visa matters, Mr. Koshy. The residents attended in their personal capacity.

While the meeting was initially called to discuss the February 3rd gathering regarding the PKS case (please see [Bulletin 88](#) for more details), the conversation also included various concerns about the AVFO's administration of Auroville.

[Points raised by the residents](#) included:

- The lack of response to numerous communications sent by the RA WCom and the IAC to the AVFO and GB
- Concerns about new internal "cumbersome and invasive" visa procedures
- Issues with linking visa recommendations to payment of "back dues" of what ought to be voluntary BCC contributions
- The cutting of maintenances
- Removal of competent people from their workplaces without justification
- Questions about the recent 'Residence Criteria Standing Order' and concerns about attempts to change the Auroville Foundation Act

Although the Secretary claimed she was open to examining specific visa cases and expressed the need for more regular communication, no concrete promises or actions were made during the meeting. It is also notable that the Secretary did not sign any of the approximately 90 pending visa letters while she was present in Auroville.

## **Dehashakti teacher shares personal account of recent takeover**

A long-time teacher at Dehashakti School of Physical Education has recently shared a [detailed personal account](#) along with the factual references of the changes that took place in mid-2024. In the document, Ganesh K, who worked at Dehashakti from 2008 to 2024 in various roles including as an executive, outlines what he describes as a "forced transition" in the management and operation of Dehashakti.

The account raises concerns about the formation and authority of the Auroville Physical Education Board (AVPEB), which has apparently changed its designation to "Body" in recent communications. The document gives a detailed description of how AVPEB implemented significant changes including mandatory assessments that determined whether teachers could continue their work. What was initially presented as a voluntary learning program (IAPE) reportedly became compulsory, with assessments marking teachers as either "pass" or "fail" - a practice the author asserts contradicts Auroville's foundational principles.

The document further details how this process of transition led to a disrespectful treatment of Dehashakti teachers. The author expounds that teachers were removed from their positions without proper communication, dignity or respect. Sudden changes to maintenance arrangements were implemented, and there was a lack of transparent dialogue throughout the process. According to the account, neither parents, schools, nor the school board intervened to address these concerns, which the author suggests demonstrates "a deeper misalignment with Auroville's values of integral education and community spirit."

## Miscellaneous news

- **Aurovilian Diaspora:** A new WhatsApp community has been created called Aurovilian Diaspora. You can find the link to join [here](#). The group is aimed at “[Aurovilians] who have left our community, are considering leaving or are still present in Auroville ... we invite you to spread the universal spirit of the Auroville beyond its current boundaries!”
- **AMLS response to GB member:** Auroville Media Liaison Service shared a [response](#) to comments that a GB member, Professor Goutam Ghosal, made about Aurovilians on his public Twitter account. As shared in [Bulletin 43](#), this is not the first time that Professor Ghosal has made disparaging and unsubstantiated claims against a section of Auroville’s residents.
- **An Aurovilian responds in N&N:** In RA News & Notes no 1063 an Aurovilian has shared [their response](#) to the claims made by AVFO allies that there was violence and aggression at Town Hall on February 3rd 2025.
- **IOB/Auroville ‘collaboration’:** The Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has apparently ‘expressed an interest’ in collaborating with Auroville. Please see [here](#) for an article featured in The Hindu. The IOB will apparently “explore avenues of collaboration with Auroville to enhance financial accessibility for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and sustainable solar energy entities in the international township.”
- **The RA WCom released its report** for October-December 2024. Please see [here](#) for the report.
- **AV.org email problems:** The Forest Group recently reported that their auroville.org.in email ID has been closed entirely, meaning that they are unable to communicate with any of the AVFO ‘working groups’ who have refused to accept emails from any other IDs. Several other entities who are not aligned with the AVFO also reported the same issue.

## Media & Other Links

- **RA Forest Caretakers:** The RA Forest Caretakers shared their 6th Newsletter, please find the link [here](#).
- 1st March 2025, **Youtube:** [Journal of an Auroville Lover](#) , french version: [Journal d'un amoureux d'Auroville](#)
- 26th February 2025, **news18.com:** ['Idea Was To Spread The Word': Couple's Exhibition On Hindu Persecution In Bangladesh In Spotlight](#)
- 21st February 2025, **rfi.fr:** [La fin des villes serait pour bientôt](#) (podcast, in French)
- 13th February 2025, **The Hindu:** [Wilful violation: On the Tamil Nadu Governor's conduct](#)
- 3rd March 2025, **infomeduse.ch:** [Chroniques indiennes – Auroville dans la tourmente](#) (in French)

## 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/evolvingalaxy>

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](mailto:evolvingalaxy@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.

You receive this email because you have joined the newsletter **Evolving Galaxy** With the address  
evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com.

[Unsubscribe](#) to no longer receive emails from us.