



**ISSUE 08**

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# VOICE OF AUROVILLE

News & Highlights from the Auroville Community



This publication is endorsed by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation.

**AUROVILLE**  
Media Liaison



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*Cover image: New Year meditation at Auroville's Tibetan Pavilion, 31 December 2024*

*Closing image: Auroville's 50th anniversary, 28th February 2018*

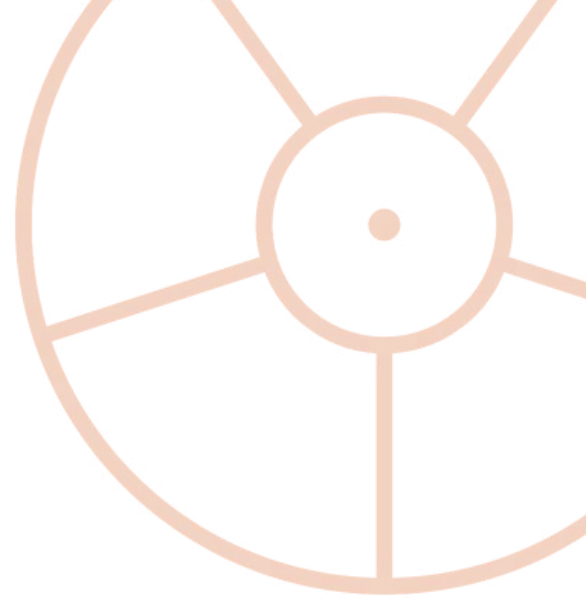
# — Introduction

## About us

*Voice of Auroville* is a quarterly journal to inform wellwishers and friends of Auroville across India and the globe on the current unfolding events with **factual updates** and **articles**. The contents convey perspectives from Auroville's Residents' Assembly (one of the Auroville Foundation's three statutory bodies).

## What is Auroville?

Founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa, known as the Mother, Auroville is an international project based on the vision of the great sage and philosopher Sri Aurobindo. This unique experiment in human unity attracts seekers and visitors from all over India and the world. You can find a quick introduction to Auroville in the first issue of *Voice of Auroville*, by visiting [auroville.media/voa](http://auroville.media/voa) or by scanning this QR code.



“Our position is clear. We do not fight against any creed, any religion. We do not fight against any form of government. We do not fight against any social class. We do not fight against any nation or civilization.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.”

**The Mother,**  
February 1965



# — Introduction

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# Editorial Note

## Navigating deepening challenges

Auroville, the universal township dedicated to human unity, now finds itself at a pivotal moment in its 57-year journey. The reappointment of Dr Jayanti Ravi as Secretary of the Auroville Foundation in December 2024 has intensified the community's ongoing crisis, extending what has already been nearly four years of systematic dismantling of Auroville's participatory governance structures.

As documented throughout this issue, the Auroville Foundation Secretary's Office (AVFO) and its appointees have escalated their control over all aspects of community life through increasingly restrictive measures. A new "Code of Conduct" attempts to regulate residents' movements, housing arrangements, and even social gatherings. Economic practices that once embodied Auroville's founding vision are being replaced by rigid financial impositions that reduce the community's complex economic ecosystem to merely transactional relationships. Meanwhile, environmental destruction continues, with tree-cutting campaigns and poorly planned infrastructure projects damaging Auroville's carefully regenerated landscape.

The landmark report 'Auroville in Crisis & The Way Forward', produced by the Auroville Global Fellowship and presented in this issue, provides both comprehensive

documentation of the current situation and potential solutions. Drawing on over 2,000 pages of evidence, it offers concrete steps to restore balance to Auroville's governance while addressing legitimate concerns about its functioning. Yet even as this report circulates, the relentless pressure on the community continues to mount, leaving many residents exhausted and disheartened after years of resistance.



*Matrimandir lake heavily damaged by Cyclone Fengal, Dec. 2024*

# *Editorial Note (continued)*

The situation detailed in this issue paints a sobering picture of mounting challenges with few immediate prospects for resolution.

Despite this harsh reality, Aurovilians continue their daily struggle to preserve what remains of the community's founding vision and physical infrastructure, often with diminishing resources and energy.

As Auroville faces perhaps its greatest challenge yet, the need for awareness and support from well-wishers worldwide has never been more crucial. This experiment in human unity, which India has generously

hosted and nurtured for over five decades, continues to offer vital lessons for our collective future.

Though the path forward appears increasingly uncertain, we invite you to bear witness to these developments and consider how you might contribute to preserving and strengthening this beacon of hope from India to the world. You can find ways to help on page 36 of this issue.

***Voice of Auroville editors,  
March 2025***

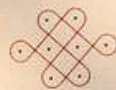


*New Year meditation at Auroville's Tibetan Pavilion, 31 December 2024*

AUROVILLE IN CRISIS

— & —

THE WAY FORWARD



# ‘Auroville in Crisis and the Way Forward’

*An independent report by international experts*

At a time when Auroville faces its greatest governance challenge in 56 years, a group of international experts and supporters has produced what may be the most comprehensive analysis yet of the current crisis. Released in January 2025, this landmark 64-page report not only documents the extent of recent disruptions to Auroville's functioning but also charts a clear path toward resolution.

A subgroup of the Auroville Global Fellowship (**AGF**), a network of over fifty international experts and supporters who have contributed significantly in fields related to Auroville's evolutionary ideals, spent over seven months conducting an extensive review of over 2,000 pages of documentation to create this thorough analysis.

## **Comprehensive research and documentation**

The report, titled ‘Auroville in Crisis & The Way Forward’, draws from multiple sources including communications from the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, Governing Board Minutes, International Advisory Council statements, interviews with individuals



who worked with both previous and current administrations, and extensive legal documentation.

Through careful analysis of this evidence, the AGF identifies systematic violations in six key areas: governance, financial management, planning and development, communications, safety and security, and impact on local communities. It details how the current administration has departed dramatically from decades of precedent in its authoritarian reinterpretation and implementation of the Auroville Foundation Act.



# — *Report (continued)*

## **Pattern of violations**

The report documents a pattern of actions that violate both spiritual principles and legal frameworks. According to the report, the administration that took control in 2021 "overthrew these values and replaced them with ones that are antithetical to them". The authors emphasize that many of the documented actions "are not just a matter of contravening universal moral, ethical and spiritual standards... A disturbing number of them also violate Indian law."

One of the most serious findings concerns recent land exchanges that have resulted in massive financial losses for Auroville – estimated at over 240 crore rupees (US\$28 million). These transactions were carried out with "complete opacity, lack of proper process and due diligence, and lack of consultation". The report details how

these exchanges have already impacted working farms, threatened food security, and undermined decades of careful land stewardship.

The report details the systematic dismantling of Auroville's participatory governance structure through forceful takeovers of working groups, dismissal of experienced executives without cause, censorship of communications, and various forms of retaliation against residents who raise concerns. The administration has rejected or simply ignored multiple court rulings and "persists in unilateral, unaccountable decision-making".

## **Environmental and bioregional destruction**

The report's analysis of environmental and bioregional impacts highlights a concerning departure from Auroville's long-standing commitment to integral development. The authors emphasize how the administration's actions undermine decades of careful work that has made Auroville an internationally recognized model for sustainable urban-rural development.

The report documents critical damage to vital water catchment systems without proper environmental assessments. This impacts not only Auroville's ecosystem but also threatens the water security of surrounding villages that have depended on these carefully managed aquifers for five decades.



*Ongoing works on the Vikas Radial, February 2025*

# — *Report (continued)*

Additionally, the authors detail the removal of thousands of trees, including ongoing indiscriminate cutting of protected species that legally require special permission before removal. This continuing destruction ignores both environmental regulations and the ecological significance of Auroville's carefully regenerated forests.

The administration's actions have also fundamentally disrupted Auroville's relationship with its bioregion. Local employment has suffered as outside contractors replace trained local workers, while archaeological sites containing two-millennium-old artifacts have been bulldozed, destroying irreplaceable Tamil cultural heritage.

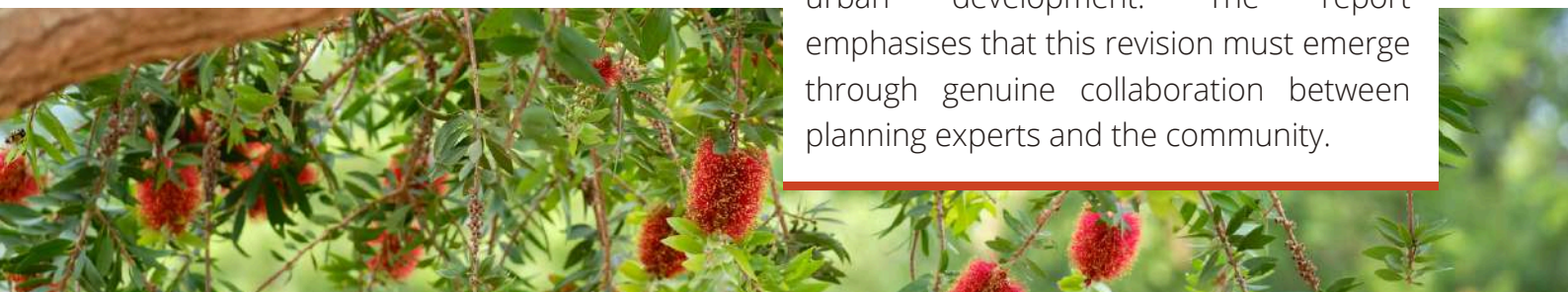
The report emphasizes that these actions not only violate environmental regulations but also squander India's investment in Auroville as a proving ground for sustainable development. The authors assert that responsible development remains both possible and essential, but must preserve both natural resources and social fabric while maintaining Auroville's role as a model for India's future.

## **A practical path forward**

While the picture painted by the report is sobering, its authors have not stopped at documenting the crisis. They also offer a detailed possible roadmap for crisis resolution. At its core are three essential outcomes needed for Auroville's positive future, each supported by specific action steps and requirements.

First is the **restoration of operational balance among the three statutory bodies of the Auroville Foundation** - the Governing Board, Residents' Assembly, and International Advisory Council. This requires rekindling the principles of fidelity, respect, and mutuality that successfully guided all previous administrations over three decades.

Second is **a collaborative updating of the Master Plan**. While the current plan provides a broad conceptual framework, it is only meant to "serve as a guide in the preparation of five year Development Plans and Annual Plans" before development proposals can be implemented. Moreover, it needs significant revision to address today's realities - from climate challenges to evolving best practices in sustainable urban development. The report emphasises that this revision must emerge through genuine collaboration between planning experts and the community.



# — *Report (continued)*

Third is the implementation of **internal self-governance reforms led by the Residents' Assembly**. The report acknowledges past challenges in Auroville's governance while calling for a transparent assessment leading to positive structural changes. This represents an opportunity, the authors note, to strengthen Auroville's unique experiment in collective decision-making.

## **Creating conditions for success**

The AGF report is explicit about the conditions required for successful implementation of these reforms. First and foremost, it calls for the cessation of all coercive measures currently directed at Auroville residents, including "actions involving the filing of false or frivolous criminal cases, spreading false narratives, delaying or suspending visa renewals, censoring freedom of speech, threatening people's homes and livelihoods, and maintaining control of Auroville's funds and assets without consultation".

Only then, the report argues, can the necessary "atmosphere of trust, confidence, safety, and openness" be created for collaborative problem-solving. Four specific steps are outlined: a renewed commitment to the Auroville Foundation Act's principles, cessation of all confrontational measures, reaffirmation of core values, and the establishment of sincere dialogue between all parties.



*Pongal celebrations at AuroOrchard farm, January 2025*

## **India's crucial role**

The report places special emphasis on India's unique position in supporting Auroville's mission. "Alone among nations," it states, "it is India that has allowed and nurtured the birth and growth of Auroville on its soil. It has done so for more than half a century. Only India has the capacity to truly understand and appreciate this bold experiment, which is rooted in its ancient tradition while pointing humankind and the community of nations toward the future."

The authors call for "an enlightened intervention by the Government of India through its Ministry of Education" to help establish the conditions necessary for successful resolution of the crisis.

# — *Report (continued)*

## **At a crossroads**

The report's release comes at a critical juncture in Auroville's history. Its thorough documentation - including testimonials from distinguished supporters - provides an essential resource for understanding both the current crisis and the way forward.

As Auroville approaches this critical crossroads, the report stands as both a warning and a beacon of hope. It demonstrates that solutions exist and that, with proper support and intervention, Auroville can not only survive this crisis but emerge stronger in its mission to serve as a living laboratory for human unity.

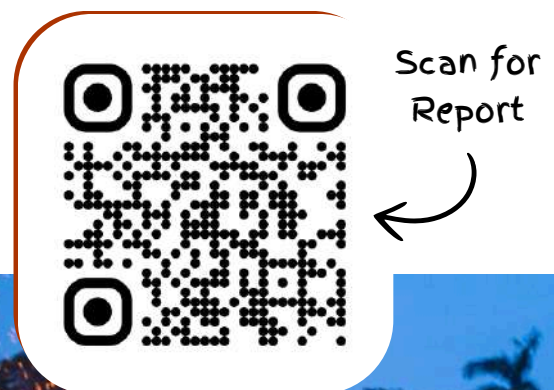
The report concludes with a powerful vision: "As these actions take effect, Auroville will thrive in its mission to evolve individual and collective consciousness, fully embodying the spiritual vision of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The values of its Charter will guide Auroville's governance and daily life, with all parties mentioned in the Auroville Foundation Act dedicated to translating its founding vision into reality and manifesting Auroville as a beacon of hope from India to the world."

## **Circulating the report**

Prior to its public release, representatives of the Auroville Global Fellowship shared this landmark report with selected officials and diplomats in India and abroad. The AGF has now invited residents and

wellwishers to help distribute the document widely, emphasizing that broad awareness of both the crisis and its potential solutions is crucial for positive change.

The complete report, including its six detailed annexures and a map of the area, can be viewed by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/AVCrisisReport> or by scanning the QR code below. All those concerned about Auroville's future are invited to read the document and share it within their networks - whether academic, diplomatic, or cultural - so that this thorough analysis and its practical recommendations can reach those who can help shape positive change.



*Dawnfire at Auroville's 57th Birthday, 28 February 2025*

— *Miracles still unfold*



*Matrimandir gardens, November 2024*



Current Crisis

AVFO tree cutting along existing roads, January 2025

# Summary of events – November 2024 to February 2025

*The aggressive takeover of Auroville - which started almost four years ago after the appointment of a new Governing Board and its Secretary, Dr Jayanti Ravi - continues unabated. Previous issues of Voice of Auroville have covered events through October 2024, a summary of which can be found here: [www.auroville.media/crisis](http://www.auroville.media/crisis).*

In the last months, the Auroville Foundation Office (**AVFO**) and its appointees have doubled down on efforts

to strong-arm the community into submission through various illegitimate orders, takeovers, chaotic and unplanned development, and a financial squeeze.

In spite of this, Auroville residents and supporters worldwide continue to strive for resolution and a way to move Auroville forward. The following pages cover new developments in the Auroville crisis between the months of November 2024 and February 2025.

# Summary

## A regimented autocracy

### *The return of the Secretary*

After several months of speculation, the re-appointment of Dr Jayanti Ravi as Secretary of the Auroville Foundation was confirmed on 20th December 2024. Dr Ravi's tenure will be for one year, or until a new Secretary is appointed.

In August 2024, Dr Ravi was repatriated back to her parent cadre in Gujarat, to take up the post of Additional Revenue Secretary of Gujarat State. It appears that, during the period August-December, she was not the Secretary of Auroville's Governing Board, despite a

number of media reports and claims from AVFO appointees that stated she had been reappointed. Throughout that period, she was occasionally in Auroville, and was present as a 'Special Invitee' at the 68th Governing Board meeting in Auroville on 5th December 2024.



It is highly unusual for a government official to hold roles at both State and Central levels and to be posted in states separated by such a distance. The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly expressed its concern in a bulletin about the Governing Board's "lack of transparency and communication" regarding her dual positions, and the administration's "intentionally opaque way of functioning". The Governing Board has consistently ignored invitations to interact with any legitimate representatives of the community, and did not include them in their December board meeting. Minutes of that meeting have still not been published or shared with resident representatives, while minutes of the 67th meeting, held in May 2024, were only released nine months later after residents submitted a legal request for publication.



*Jayanti Ravi at Ahmedabad Management Association, January 2025*

# — Summary



Matrimandir gardens, February 2025

## **New 'Code of Conduct': a tool for exclusion?**

New residence criteria and a detailed Code of Conduct were announced in a Standing Order issued on 25th November 2024 by the AVFO. These are presented as mandatory requirements with the threat of "termination" if breached.

The Order establishes strict guidelines for residents, newcomers, volunteers and permanent guests. Aurovilians must: reside in Auroville full-time; report any outside trips; and request advance approval for absences exceeding two weeks. "Unauthorised absences" beyond two weeks may result in "status termination". Residents must also obtain permission from a newly formed "Human Resources Service" to host guests and family

members beyond seven days, including spouses, elderly parents and minor children.

While some elements in the section "General principles for living in Auroville" align with long-endorsed community values – such as abstaining from violence or discrimination against others – the residence criteria, issued without the Residents' Assembly's knowledge or approval, contradicts Auroville's principles and ideals.

This Order follows earlier 2023 AVFO attempts to control admissions, terminations, and Working Committee selection – seeking to give full power and authority to the AVFO and Governing Board on matters that have always been under the purview of the Residents' Assembly. These regulations were stayed by the Madras High Court in February 2024 after legal challenges from the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly. The new residence criteria and code of conduct contradict the High Court's earlier orders, and border on contempt of court.



Matrimandir lake excavation, December 2024



# Summary

Other concerning rules from the new documents include: prohibiting anyone except the AVFO's media office from issuing press releases; requiring pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly and disabled to work, albeit in "suitable" positions; mandating regular attendance at an 'Auroville Spiritual and Material Refresher program'; and restricting social gatherings to AVFO-approved locations. The rules would be enforced by the 'Human Resources Service', a new sub-department established by the AVFO's appointees in December 2024, comprised of individuals who do not hold the community's confidence and who already occupy multiple AVFO-appointed positions of power.

The unprecedented level of control being imposed on residents' movements, work, and private spaces signals a disturbing shift toward authoritarian governance wholly incompatible with Auroville's founding vision. For a community established as an experiment in human unity and freedom, these measures represent not just bureaucratic overreach but a fundamental assault on Auroville's essence.

This increasingly restrictive approach to managing what should be a space for conscious evolution is entirely without precedent in Auroville's 57-year history and threatens to extinguish the very spirit that has guided this unique project since its inception.



*Residents questioning land mismanagement, February 2025*



*Physical Demonstration Program at Udavi School, February 2025*

# Summary

## **Artistic activities closed without warning**

The current AVFO-appointed Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) has shut down numerous artistic activities without clear reasoning, due process or community consultation. These activities enable many Aurovilians to sustain themselves, and their closure worsens financial difficulties caused by budget cuts and stipend cancellations. Beyond economic impact, these activities are vital to Auroville's cultural vibrancy and community life.

In at least one case, the AVFO FAMC claimed performing arts activities such as "acting and DJing" were "not in line with the guidelines given by The Mother for Aurovilians". However, this contradicts the Mother's vision, as she explicitly supported artistic expression, stating that "all forms" of art should be "available equally to all". Both she and Sri Aurobindo wrote plays and actively engaged in theatre.

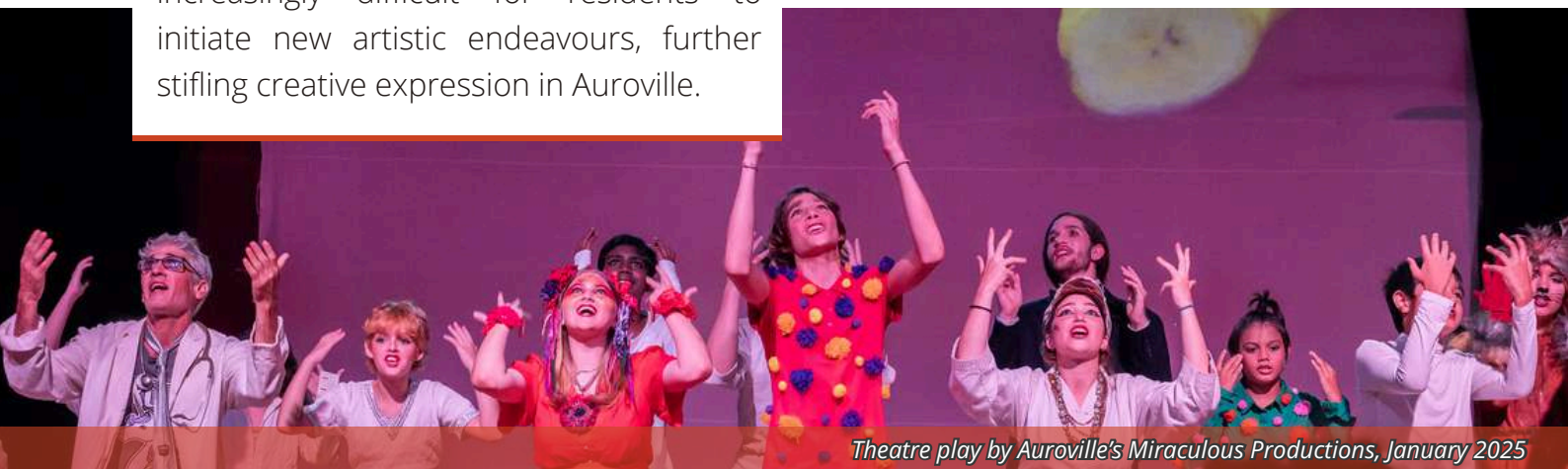
Additionally, the AVFO FAMC has made it increasingly difficult for residents to initiate new artistic endeavours, further stifling creative expression in Auroville.

## **A forcefully centralised health system**

A new AVFO-appointed 'Wellness Focus Group' has announced its plans for a centralised health system in Auroville. The proposal attempts to draw existing community-managed health services - such as the Health Centre, Sante, Arka, Farewell House and Quiet Healing Centre - under one umbrella, even though they already function effectively as reputed and highly frequented independent services.

The document proposes the creation of a 'Wellbeing Coordination Group': a 9-member body appointed by the AVFO FAMC. This committee, which does not enjoy the confidence of the community, has increasingly brought community-managed services under its control over the last two years.

The proposed services are structured into three categories, each encompassing a vast gambit of currently independent Auroville services: Proactive services, Curative services and Supportive services.



*Theatre play by Auroville's Miraculous Productions, January 2025*

# — Summary



*Theatre play by Auroville's Miraculous Productions, January 2025*

While the document emphasises positive values such as sustainability, inclusivity and integration, there are many points of concern that are not addressed. For example, the AVFO FAMC retains the power to appoint members of the Coordination Group, yet there is no stated selection criteria for these roles. A centralised Electronic Health Records system is proposed without stating any commitment to laws regarding consent for centralisation of personal health information, data privacy and data security. The proposal aims to combine health fund contributions with residents' monthly city services contribution, yet there is no clarity on what will happen to the current health fund and its current reserve. The group also plans to collaborate with private insurance providers for 'group health plans' yet it states no parameters or criteria for the selection or application of these initiatives, nor the role of the community in these endeavours. It is unclear how this initiative furthers Auroville's internal economy or long-standing goal of

developing an integrated healthcare system that effectively includes alternative health modalities. It also threatens existing reputed services, one of which is a pioneering integral model of medicine in India. It also does not address the future of Auroville's health outreach centres that benefit the surrounding population.

## **Opaque partnerships**

### ***Outsourcing Auroville civil works***

The AVFO has outsourced large amounts of construction work over the last three years to the central government's Central Public Works Department (CPWD). This has been done with little transparency and no consultation with the community, its selected representatives or the relevant Auroville units that have extensive prior experience and expertise in Auroville's development projects.

The value of the work assigned to the CPWD is an estimated 60 crore rupees (almost US\$7 million), based on the 55 tenders for works issued by the CPWD. The work includes construction of sections of the Crown, Outer Ring and radial roads, as Auroville does not own all of the required land. The necessity and the quality of these works have been repeatedly questioned by residents and experts, but concerns have always been dismissed. Development projects carried out previously by Auroville units had allowed project funds to recirculate within the community's economy and drew upon

# Summary

decades of home-grown expertise in tropical sustainable construction. The current shift to external contractors represents a significant change in the flow of development funds, sourcing of expertise processes, and a shift to the inordinate use of unsustainable materials like cement. With low-wage labour being brought in from other states, employment opportunities are also being diverted away from the local population.

Despite repeated requests from residents for transparency, standard construction documentation has not been presented, and only basic documents are available on the CPWD website. The AVFO's large-scale land clearing and the CPWD's construction is continuing even though the relevant environmental clearances have not been obtained. This matter is still under legal consideration in the courts and remains unresolved.

## ***Cementing AVFO authority via institutional ties?***

The AVFO continues to enter into institutional agreements without consulting the Residents' Assembly. At least 12 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed since January 2022, with the latest development being a planned "significant" connection between Auroville and the state of Gujarat, where the current AVFO Secretary simultaneously serves as Additional Revenue Secretary. This partnership

promotes Auroville's development models in the areas of environmental protection, water conservation, renewable energy and sustainable growth, without involving the relevant Auroville experts. The establishment of the Gujarat linkage followed the AVFO's special talk on "Good Practices at Auroville" held at Gujarat's Ahmedabad Management Association on 3rd January 2025, after which five MoUs were allegedly signed within a four-day period. The linkage and associated media coverage is part of an ongoing effort by the AVFO to market Auroville as a 'sustainable city'. While publicly capitalising on Auroville's achievements in this way, the AVFO has at the same time caused significant damage to Auroville's renowned reforestation, environmental protection and water conservation efforts. Moreover, in order to justify its intervention, the AVFO has consistently reasserted the false and contradictory narrative that Auroville residents have not achieved anything substantial over the last five decades.



*The AVFO was heavily represented at Gyan Kumbh - Puducherry, November 2024*

# Summary

Other partnerships made by the AVFO without consulting or informing the Residents' Assembly are with: the University of Pondicherry (January 2022); India's Central Public Works Department (March 2022); IIT Madras (2023); Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (February 2024); Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (May 2024); Department of Art & Culture, Pondicherry (July 2024); and with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (September 2024).

Despite multiple Right to Information (RTI) legal requests filed by residents with the relevant government Ministries, the contents of these MoUs - which directly concern residents - remain undisclosed. Minimal information about these agreements has reached the residents, and this too through social media postings and newspaper reports.



*Establishment of an Auroville-Gujarat partnership, December 2024*

## **AVFO events: whose interests do they serve?**

The AVFO continues to organise and host events and workshops for external groups without consulting or involving the relevant resident representatives and groups. These events primarily target non-Aurovilian Indian youth, exclude Aurovilians as participants or speakers, and often carry religious or political undertones.

For instance, in November 2024, the AVFO hosted the 5th Tamil Nadu Young Thinkers Forum Meeting, featuring only non-Aurovilian speakers.

In the same month, Auroville was the venue for a three-day *Flagship civilizational public policy program* catering exclusively to non-Aurovilian youth. Earlier, in May 2024, the AVFO invited applications for a newly established one-year Auroville Fellowship Program, designed for



*Ongoing works on the Vikas radial, February 2025*

# Summary

“young aspirants” to engage with Auroville. Selected fellows would be assigned to Auroville units, receive a stipend of 27,000 rupees per month (more than the stipend allotted to residents), and be required to work eight hours per day in roles such as social media, marketing, and security, again with no wider community consultation. [NB: This initiative is distinct from the Auroville Global Fellowship program, which has the confidence of the community’s Residents’ Assembly. See more info in the Acts of Faith section on page 29 of this issue.]

The pattern and manner of these events indicate that the AVFO is using Auroville to advance its own agendas, which appear to diverge from the Mother’s vision for Auroville.

## **Prioritising commercial projects**

Two new projects-in-the-making indicate the AVFO’s growing emphasis on large-scale commercialisation and tourism-focused development for Auroville.

The Southern Service Node project, announced by the AVFO FAMC in September 2024, is a planned large commercial complex featuring seven restaurants, boutiques, parking facilities for 90 cars and 420 bikes, and a mobility hub where visitors and residents can switch to/from e-vehicles and non-polluting modes of transport for travel within Auroville. This new main gateway to Auroville would funnel visitors through designated commercial zones to other



*Laying claim to environmentally friendly development, 2022*



*Bharat Nivas’s new ‘wildlife’ tourist attraction, June 2024*

parts of Auroville, presenting Auroville primarily as a tourist attraction. The AVFO has apparently secured funding for construction, but the source of funding is opaque.

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The recently-opened 'educational hub' Le Paradis D'Auro is a display centre for animals including 30 cows, 350 birds across 8 species, horses, guinea pigs, rabbits and other creatures. While the project claims to promote environmental awareness, concerns have been raised about the ethics of confining animals in artificial environments for visitor entertainment. It is also a jarring contradiction to create such a centre while actively destroying the habitats of the indigenous wildlife that has returned to the area thanks to the decades of land rehabilitation work carried out by Auroville residents.



*Matrimandir lake heavily damaged by Cyclone Fengal, Dec. 2024*

## Senseless destruction

### ***Matrimandir lake breaks open***

The Matrimandir Lake suffered severe structural damage following Cyclone Fengal. The test lake's retaining wall, built with prefabricated "Lego" blocks, was breached under the onslaught of Fengal, causing water to spill into an adjacent excavation site, causing the High Density Polyethylene lining to be torn.

After the breakage, an open letter to Matrimandir executives by concerned residents urged them (once again) to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). On 5th December 2024, a [report](#) signed by the Matrimandir executives acknowledged the failure, citing "unforeseen factors": heavy rainfall, water channelling, soil softening, and overflow mismanagement. These are dubious excuses, as any construction effort in this bioregion must take into account all of the listed factors as a matter of course. Reports of constant leaks in completed sections further underscore these concerns. Additionally, post-collapse, large volumes of lake water were released onto roads instead of being redirected for aquifer recharge. The report also downplayed financial losses, claiming the blocks were reusable despite photographic evidence of substantial damage.

The previous chief engineer of the test lake and channel had earlier resigned when the Matrimandir Lake Team decided

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to move forward with the second phase of construction before the test lake was fully evaluated and completed. Following the collapse, he provided a [detailed report](#), indicating that the retaining wall's structural integrity was compromised due to inadequate planning and a failure to account for extreme weather conditions. He has warned that bypassing phased construction precludes the ability to detect and address potential weaknesses before expanding the project. Other critics have argued that independent assessments should be conducted before continuing construction, and have highlighted the broader issue of the lack of transparency in the decision-making process, as well as concerns for the long-term sustainability of the lake's design.

Instead of addressing the reasons for this dramatic and costly event, the Matrimandir team plans to proceed without phased construction and without an independent assessment, increasing the risk of future failures.

## **Moving earth**

Soil continues to be transported from Auroville's Matrimandir building site to unknown outside locations, and across the boundaries between Tamil Nadu State and Puducherry Territory, allegedly without the required authorisation. This operation appears to have the backing of the Matrimandir executives.

In response to this serious issue, an appeal has been made to the AVFO seeking clarification about any existing permissions for this inter-state soil transportation, calling for an investigation whether such permissions are absent, and demanding immediate action to halt unauthorised excavation and transportation.



*Matrimandir lake heavily damaged by Cyclone Fengal, December 2024*



# Summary



## ***Bulldozing through sanctuaries and communities alike***

In November 2024, CPWD workers began constructing a radial road through Revelation Forest, breaking the fence and clearing the path despite alternative access via the main gate.

This left the area vulnerable to animal grazing and wood theft. Revelation Forest is the site of a sanctuary containing rare and endangered plant and wildlife species, and the Master Plan - Perspective 2025 document shows only a green corridor with an earthen road in this area.

The Revelation Management Team attempted to intervene, requesting paperwork that authorised the work. In response, a police complaint was filed against them claiming obstruction of government work, a criminal offence, when in fact Auroville is an autonomous body and not a government department.

In October 2024, work on the Vikas Radial began without notifying nearby residents, disrupting access to homes and parking. AVFO appointees proposed an alternative route via a cycle path, but monsoon rains rendered it impassable.

After a brief pause, due to residents' insistence on a more conscious approach, construction continues on the road and has rendered it difficult or impossible to traverse for elderly residents in the area. In February 2025, additional mature trees along the broken up road were cut.

# Summary

## **Brutalising the trees**

Since January 2025, massive tree cutting has taken place across many areas of Auroville, often carried out by unknown workers. Following the AVFO appointees' decision to widen road sections from 9 metres to 30 metres, many sacred trees, endangered or protected species, and mature specimens have been felled.

Some trees had initially been accommodated within a new road's trajectory, but some of these were literally cemented into the road. All of these trees were later brutally cut down with no appropriate work orders.



*Trees cemented within existing roads, January 2025*



*Trees stripped of their bark by AVFO appointees, February 2025*

Some protected species like palmyra were dug up, supposedly for transplantation, but none of the necessary procedures to ensure the specimens' survival were respected. In fact, virtually none of the trees transplanted since 2023 under orders of AVFO appointees have survived. The estimated total number of felled trees since 2021 exceeds 20,000, and no planting of new trees at the required 10:1 ratio has taken place. In February, a new method of tree destruction emerged. Mature trees in certain areas were deliberately stripped of their bark, a practice known to cause slow death without the immediate visibility of cutting the trees down.

# Summary

## **A bridge to nowhere**

The construction of a bridge over Darkali Forest Park, as part of the Crown building project, continues to be plagued with unnecessary destruction, poor construction, and many irregularities and contraventions of law. A [November 2024 report](#) by the Auroville Earth Institute Director reveals serious issues with the project. The CPWD expanded the planned 25-metre bridge to 160 metres, with excavation widths of 25 metres, substantially exceeding the National Green Tribunal's Joint Committee recommendation of a 9.1-metre width.

The construction destroyed rainwater systems that collected 3 million litres annually, and the area now lacks adequate drainage planning in an area handling 60% of the Crown corridor runoff from rainfall.

As forewarned by Auroville's experts, recent heavy rainfall caused dramatic flooding at the site. Project costs have jumped from 50 lakh rupees (over US\$57 thousand) to 5 crore rupees (over US\$570 thousand), while using inadequate materials and improper road preparation. No environmental impact assessments were conducted.

AVFO appointees had previously rejected Darkali stewards' expert proposal for an alternative route that would have preserved the ecosystem. Construction continues despite its violation of Joint Committee recommendations on road width and environmental protection.



*The destroyed water catchment pond in Darkali Forest, December 2024*

# Summary

## Funds and assets in jeopardy

### Waste of funds continues

On the 4km-long Crown corridor, the pending acquisition of seven plots of private land has stalled completion of the road. The situation is similar on the new trajectories of radial roads. There are complaints about the general poor quality of the newly-constructed roads, the inadequate provisions for rainwater runoff, and the dangers caused by inadequate signage and other safety measures.



At the same time, these partial roadworks have caused the price of land in the immediate area to more than double over the last four years. At times, it appears the AVFO's main priority in current roadwork is to expend funds within a given time frame, rather than to create appropriate good-quality road infrastructure.



Arbitrary changes to road trajectories has resulted in new roads being built on top of, or right alongside, existing roads that were both well-built and well-functioning. Additionally, Auroville continues to lose mature trees (that were intended to shade the roads) as well as actively-used, valuable buildings to these erratic changes. The waste of funds is glaringly apparent.



# Summary

## **Youth hostel repurposed for AVFO staff**

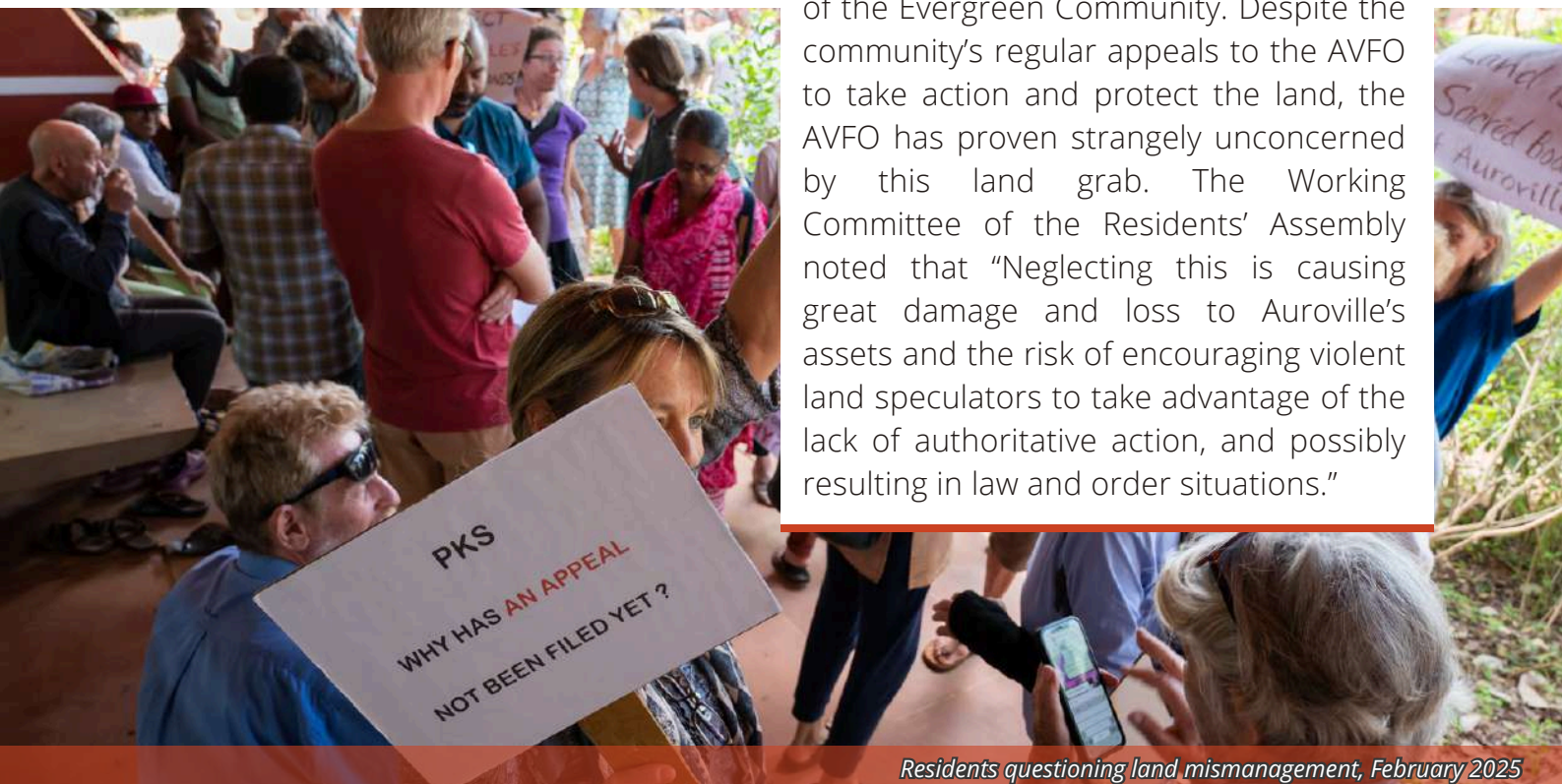
In January 2025, all volunteers staying in Mitra, the Youth Hostel near the central administration area, were ordered to vacate their rooms in order for the AVFO to house a group of 27 financial auditors. Over the last several years, the AVFO has repeatedly taken over much-needed residential assets for their staff, compounding the existing housing crisis. Residents and volunteers are currently being told that there is not enough housing to meet their needs.

While initially only Government-of-India-funded assets were appropriated by the AVFO, now some houses that were privately funded have been taken over by AVFO staff members.

## **Auroville land grab: AVFO's silence and inaction**

After repeated pleas from the Residents' Assembly to the AVFO to file an appeal in the court over disputed land at Auroville's Evergreen community, the AVFO finally filed an appeal on the last date possible, 7th February 2025.

Almost three acres of prime Auroville land within the Master Plan area was wrongfully appropriated by a politically-affiliated real estate developer in 2022. This land has since been denuded of all trees and vegetation, and most recently appears to be slated for development as 'luxury villa plots'. The land had been in Auroville's exclusive and peaceful possession since its purchase in 1992, with Auroville paying the Land Tax from that date, and was re-afforested as part of the Evergreen Community. Despite the community's regular appeals to the AVFO to take action and protect the land, the AVFO has proven strangely unconcerned by this land grab. The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly noted that "Neglecting this is causing great damage and loss to Auroville's assets and the risk of encouraging violent land speculators to take advantage of the lack of authoritative action, and possibly resulting in law and order situations."



*Residents questioning land mismanagement, February 2025*

# — Summary

It was only after over 100 concerned community members gathered at the AVFO building to present a signed petition (with over 700 signatures collected in 48 hours) that the AVFO finally filed a legal motion on the last possible date. The AVFO has not explained its delay, has made no other attempts to prevent the encroachment, has conducted no official survey to mark the land, nor made any moves to verify the boundaries of this extremely valuable roadside land.

## Legal updates

### ***Governing Board intent to amend Foundation Act***

The Governing Board has finally released the minutes of its 67th meeting of May 2024, which contain a number of disturbing elements. The notes state that the Board aims to “amend certain provisions in the Auroville Foundation Act” as the Board feels it has been subjected to a recent “pattern of repeated misinterpretations”. In particular, they intend “to remove ambiguity in the statutory provisions to facilitate a strong administration in Auroville”.

The two other authorities of the Auroville Foundation, namely the Residents’ Assembly and the International Advisory Council, are not being consulted in this process which could severely undermine Auroville’s long-standing culture of collective stewardship and participatory governance. Such statutory changes would irreversibly alter the very essence of Auroville and its founding principles. Other concerning initiatives approved at the meeting include: the closure of the community’s financial service and handing over to a nationalised or private bank; strong intent to sell all outlying Auroville lands; a new restrictive media policy; employment of more government officers; intent to open an AVFO Liaison Office in Delhi; and provisions for recruiting more ‘honorary Aurovilians’ and ‘Auroville Goodwill Ambassadors’.



*Governing Board meets without informing the community, Dec. 2024*

# — Summary



The Supreme Court has concluded hearings on two appeals by the Auroville Foundation (represented by the Secretary): one against the April 2022 National Green Tribunal order concerning clearing of trees and the need for Environmental Clearance before large-scale development could happen; and another regarding the Town Development Council matter that was ruled on by the Madras High Court in March 2024 [see [Voice of Auroville, Issue 06](#)]. Arguments were recently completed, and the verdict is now reserved for final judgement.

## **Other legal updates**

As covered in [Issue 07 of Voice of Auroville](#), a court case concerning the membership of the Working Committee, which had been ongoing since April 2023, received a ruling on 1st August 2024. A single-judge bench of the Madras High Court dismissed the original petition filed by representatives of the Residents' Assembly on procedural grounds. Still, the court acknowledged the continuing validity of previous rulings that protected the Residents' Assembly's right to elect its own representatives. In response to the dismissal, the duly elected Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly filed an appeal with the Madras High Court. This appeal was accepted on 4th February 2025, with hearings expected to take place in the coming months.

## **Acts of faith**

### ***An independent report proposes solutions***

An independent comprehensive report '[Auroville in Crisis & the Way Forward](#)' was released by the Auroville Global Fellowship in January 2025. It summarises key facts about Auroville's current situation, and presents practical solutions to set it on a positive path that is in line with the Auroville Foundation Act and the Auroville Charter. (See article on [page 05](#).)



# Summary

The report has been distributed to a number of Indian officials and many global supporters of Auroville. It calls for the urgent and sympathetic intervention of the Government of India to reverse the direction of the Auroville Foundation's current administration, so that Auroville can properly and productively fulfil its envisaged purpose for India and the world.

## Standing firm

For almost three years, residents have held a round-the-clock vigil in the Auroville Council room in Town Hall, to ensure that the only remaining meeting space for Residents' Assembly working groups and residents is safeguarded for community use. On 8th November 2024, a fire broke out in the room due to faulty wiring. The person holding vigil was woken by smoke at 2 am, and managed to put out the fire before it spread to the rest of the Town Hall and cause serious damage. Despite the threat to safety, the relevant AVFO unit has not taken responsibility for repairs.

Across Auroville, residents continue to document the ongoing crisis through various means, often at personal risk. Many regularly monitor and record tree cutting incidents and other environmental violations, creating a vital historical record despite facing intimidation and seeing little immediate change. The Evolving Galaxy Bulletin and the community-funded RA News&Notes publications persist through volunteer efforts and minimal resources,



ensuring that residents' experiences and perspectives reach the wider community. Meanwhile, members of key working groups such as the Working Committee stretch themselves to their limits, working tirelessly to safeguard Auroville's integrity and founding principles. These continuous efforts represent profound acts of faith in the Dream of Auroville - a belief that this unique experiment in human unity holds profound meaning not just for its current residents but for future generations, for India and for humanity as a whole. Despite the challenges, Aurovilians remain committed to protecting this vision as a living legacy and a possibility for a better world.



# Summary

## Looking ahead

As Auroville navigates this critical period and advocates for collaborative best-practice urban development as a conscious way forward, the support of well-wishers worldwide remains crucial.

You, as a reader, can play a vital role in bolstering Auroville and its residents through this crisis. Your awareness and active support make a real difference. To learn more about how you can help, please refer to the last page of this issue.

***Voice of Auroville editors,  
March 2025***



“I feel that if there were a million Aurovilles in this world, on this earth, the whole of this earth will be better, and the example must spread throughout from here. Perhaps there is nowhere in the world where there is this kind of spirit and this kind of faith, a visible belief in oneself, and in the goodness of people.”

**J.R.D. Tata,**

Industrialist and Philanthropist, former member of Auroville’s International Advisory Council, 1986

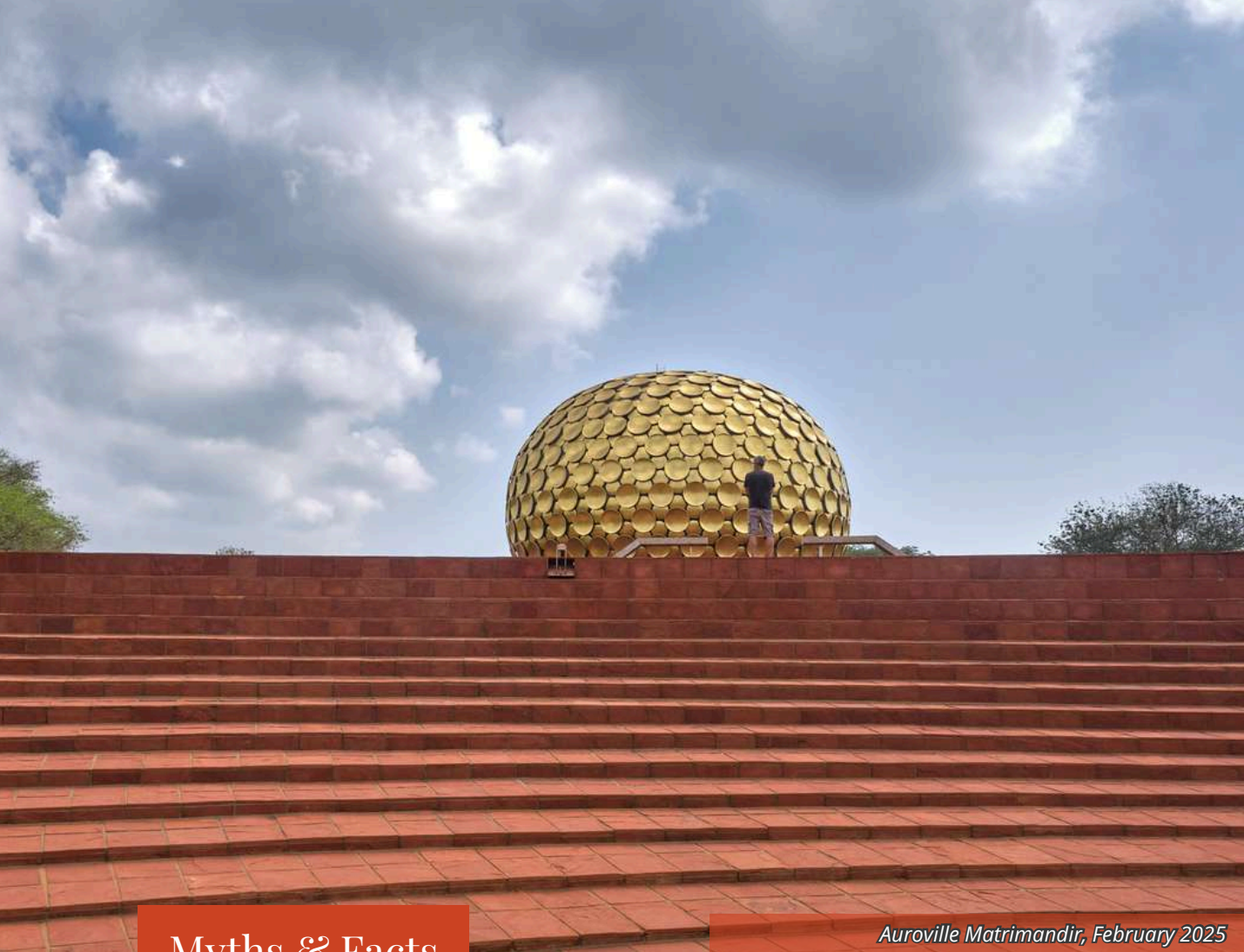


*Decorations in Matrimandir gardens, 24 November 2024*

— *From lake to leak*



*Matrimandir lake heavily damaged by Cyclone Fengal, December 2024*



Myths & Facts

*Auroville Matrimandir, February 2025*

# Countering misleading narratives

# 6

Over the last two years, an increasing number of misleading narratives have been spreading within Auroville and in the media, and have created confusion. This section aims to clarify and debunk one of these narratives with facts.

- **Myth: The Auroville township wants to operate outside the Indian legal framework.**

# — *Countering misleading narratives*

**Myth: The Auroville township wants to operate outside the Indian legal framework.**

**Fact:** Auroville’s guiding principles, inspired by the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, emphasise universal human unity and ethical living. These ideals are not at odds with Indian law, but rather resonate with the Indian Constitution’s core values of secularism, justice, and equality. Auroville’s governance model wants to be an experiment in collective decision-making, but it is not a declaration of independence from the state.

The township was granted the right to self-organisation when the Indian Parliament passed the Auroville Foundation Act in 1988, creating the Auroville Foundation as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education. Auroville is grateful to the Indian government for implementing this unique Act that upholds the community’s collective decision-making processes, roles and structures. Far from being autonomous in a separatist sense, Auroville’s self-organisation structure experiments and operates within a framework explicitly defined and protected by Indian legislation.



*Law students and judges visit Matrimandir gardens, January 2025*

The Act established the Auroville Foundation, an entity which gives the township a legal framework. The Foundation comprises three governing authorities – the Governing Board, the Residents’ Assembly, and the International Advisory Council – which are meant to function in a spirit of mutuality to ensure Auroville’s progress according to the Auroville Charter, under the purview of Indian law.

Auroville actively cooperates with state and national authorities on a wide range of issues, including urban planning, environmental conservation, education, village development, alternative energies and more. For instance, the township’s reforestation and renewable energy initiatives align closely with Indian policies promoting sustainable development. Residents must and do comply with national laws.



*Law students and judges visit Matrimandir gardens, January 2025*

# — *Countering misleading narratives*

Additionally, Auroville has built a strong and positive relationship with the local law authorities over the years, to deal with any issues that may arise, in the most efficient and just manner, within Indian legal frameworks.

At the same time, the community has established and experimented with different forms of internal conflict resolution, including mediation and arbitration, which aim to foster harmony in the township. These processes reflect Auroville's commitment to exploring methods of natural justice that nurture understanding and reconciliation among residents.

Such approaches are an integral part of Auroville's journey toward fulfilling its original vision as a place where human unity can flourish through mutual respect and collaborative problem-solving. These internal mechanisms operate wholly within the framework of Indian law, complementing rather than replacing the established legal systems of Auroville's host nation.

They represent Auroville's ongoing experimentation with creating social structures that embody its founding principles while respecting the sovereign legal context in which it exists.

While a significant portion of the Auroville community has expressed its disagreement with oppressive measures by the Foundation Office administration over the last three years – such as widespread environmental destruction or threats to freedom of speech – this opposition has been peaceful and expressed within the bounds of Indian law. The court cases instigated by residents once again show the faith that Aurovilians place in the Indian justice system to deliver fair-handed legal decisions.

Auroville's success lies in its ability to integrate its visionary ideals with the practical realities of functioning within a democratic nation. The principles of human unity and harmonious collective decision-making align deeply with the nation's constitutional values. By adhering to Indian laws and collaborating with government bodies, Auroville demonstrates the value of community decision-making within the larger state and national framework.



# — *How to help?*

Thank you for reading our eighth issue of *Voice of Auroville*. We hope that you found it an informative read, despite the alarming news it covers.

The aim of our journal is to give voice to the Residents' Assembly of Auroville and uphold its decades of work to realise 'the City the Earth Needs' for the common good.

Wondering what you can do to help the Auroville community? Here are a few immediate suggestions:



## 1 Stay updated and well informed

The new administrative regime has invested much of its efforts in **controlling the narrative** by censoring information, publishing oversimplified propaganda through diverse channels and punishing dissenting views. Today more than ever, we are all invited to be discerning and check where each piece of information originates from.

Some reliable and fact-based news sources, other than this journal, include the [www.auroville.media](http://www.auroville.media) website, and a community-led newsletter called "Evolving Galaxy". For more information, contact [evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com](mailto:evolvinggalaxy@gmail.com). To subscribe to *Voice of Auroville*, contact [voiceofauroville@auroville.services](mailto:voiceofauroville@auroville.services)

## 2 Spread the word, raise awareness

Share this journal - and other testimonies - with your contacts and friends to make sure the voice of the Aurovilians are not silenced. Everyone should know that Auroville needs help. If you can, reach out to potential change-makers: people with a wide network, journalists, diplomats, artists...

## 3 Offer your service or financial support

The current struggle for Auroville's survival requires everyone's help and participation. If you are able to offer some of your time and energy, please get in touch with [workingcom@auroville.services](mailto:workingcom@auroville.services). If you can offer some financial support to help those whose livelihoods have been impacted by the current crisis, reach out to [bcc@auroville.services](mailto:bcc@auroville.services). Thank you - together we are stronger.



*“You should constantly keep good will and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquillity and equality.”*

– The Mother,  
16 December 1966



*Auroville's 50th anniversary, 28th February 2018*



**WORKING COMMITTEE**  
of the Residents' Assembly  
AUROVILLE FOUNDATION

This publication is endorsed by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation.

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# VOICE OF AUROVILLE

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