



AUROVILLE FOUNDATION

Minutes of the 54th Meeting of the Governing Board

8th September 2019 at Auroville

Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman presided over and called the meeting to order.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Dr. Nirima Oza, Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty, Dr. K. Parameswaran and Shri. Madan Gopal were present.

Dr. Anirban Ganguly could not attend the meeting as informed.

Ex- officio representatives of the Ministry of H.R.D. Govt. of India did not attend. The Integrated Finance Division (IFD) of the Ministry have sent comments /remarks on the agenda items which have been noted by the Board.

Shri. Madan Mohan, holding Additional charge of Joint Secretary from M.H.R.D has informed that he could not attend.

Dr. G. Seetharaman, Secretary (charge) assisted the meeting along with Shri. P. R. Srinivasamurty, Under Secretary.

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 53rd Meeting:

Minutes of the meeting were approved and confirmed by the members.

2. Action taken on the Minutes of the 53rd Meeting:

The Board noted the action taken. The comments received from the IFD of the Ministry of H.R.D were noted. Subject to the strict compliance of the relevant statutory provisions and also strict compliance of the related Govt. of India instructions and guidelines including those issued by the Central Vigilance Commission the Minutes are confirmed.

3. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Special meeting:

Minutes of the Special meeting held on 26th August, 2019 at New Delhi were discussed and after slightly amending the items at 6 (b) and (c) were approved by the members present.

4. Grant-in-Aid for 2019-20: The budget approved by the Ministry is of Rs. 18.00 Crores in total as per the allotments and that only Rs. 5.00 Crore as 1st Instalment

for the financial year 2019-20 was noted by the Board. It was explained by the Secretary, AF that grant release depends on proper implementation of the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) as per the Govt. of India guidelines, which should be fully functional. Board directed the Secretary to ensure proper and full implementation of the PFMS at the earliest.

Integrated Finance Division of MHRD on behalf of the JS & FA sent their comments to this agenda item that "Expenditure out of the Government of India / MHRD Grant should be strictly regulated as per the relevant provisions of GFRs, 2017 and related CVC guidelines".

5. Decisions taken by the Chairman, Auroville Foundation and circulated to the Members of the Board were confirmed:

- (i) Constituting Enquiry Committee.
- (ii) Standing Order of TDC amended.

6. Annual Accounts and Report 2018-19:

The Board members noted the Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19 for approval in principle. Members felt that these may be circulated to all the members and obtain the approval within a week.

7. Tamil Heritage Centre (THC):

The Board noted the very slow progress of the criminal investigation by the police department and directed the Secretary, AF to follow up for an early report.

THC Monitoring Committee presented the designs for the roof and shown the slides of the progress on the building which is expected to be completed by March, 2020 and within the budget of Rs. 1.50 crores provisionally approved by the Board.

The request by the Monitoring Committee for additional allocation of Rs. 10.00 lakhs (approximately) for construction of toilets for the THC building complex was considered and approved by the Board as it is an essential facility which was not budgeted earlier.

8. Land related issues:

The Board observed that consolidation of the land in the city area as per the Master Plan is affected since exchange of lands have been put on hold due to lack of proper mechanism for evaluation of land values. It was decided to consult an approved valuer for the lands to ascertain the reasonable price so that lands within the City and Green belt areas if the Board and other concerned committees so agree can be acquired from private parties in exchange for the AF lands situated outside the Master Plan area.

The current system of purchase of lands by the Landboard has not been satisfactory as we have been unable to acquire any sizeable portions of land without much legal implications. The Secretary, AF has been directed to explore the possibilities to expedite the land acquisition, especially in the City area. The Board advised that the new task force constituted for the “Auroville Township Development” and “Land consolidation” may study the available options in this regard and report back as soon as possible.

Integrated Finance Division of MHRD on behalf of the JS & FA sent their comments to this agenda item that “Detailed proposal may be sent to MHRD”.

9. The functioning of the Town Development Council (TDC):

The Governing Board noted with concern that the present composition of the TDC is still incomplete and decided to reiterate that the Working Committee should urgently ensure a fully functional TDC as per the revised Standing Order.

NTDA Proposal:

In case Auroville Foundation decides to further postpone engagement with Tamil Nadu Government for establishment of a statutory land use regulation mechanism (through NTDA or other suitable mechanisms), neither individual Residents of Auroville, nor Auroville Foundation with its present Auroville Master Plan can

prevent or control explosion of new private developments taking place within the Master Plan Area that are discordant to Auroville Ideals and Charter.

While the Governing Board is aware that opinion in this matter among the residents are divided, it has already waited seven years and has therefore decided to take the decision in the long-term interests of Auroville.

The Governing Board, after careful consideration and keeping in mind its commitment to bring a new momentum in promoting and protecting developments in Auroville as per the Auroville Foundation Act 1988, and specially to protect Auroville and the Auroville Master Plan, for safeguarding development, lands, spaces and areas surroundings Auroville, hereby resolves as follows;

- a) **Auroville is meant to be a township with a population of 50,000. The soul of the township, the Matrimandir, has been completed. Now the town needs to be built within a time frame of 10 – 15 years so that thousands of people who want to contribute to the realisation of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, can come and live and work in the township. The true experiment of Auroville will only start when Auroville is a vibrant township with 50,000 residents who have come with an “integral goodwill and a constant aspiration to know the Truth”. All programs and projects of the Auroville Foundation will henceforth be aligned with the larger program of building the Auroville township within a time frame and as per the Auroville Master Plan. All residents of Auroville are expected to contribute towards the realisation of this goal.**
- b) **In the light of the above (a), the Secretary, Auroville Foundation is hereby authorised to engage with the Tamil Nadu Government to further develop the NTDA option under the relevant laws of the state of Tamil Nadu in order to ensure proper protection and statutory land use regulation mechanism for promotion and safety of Auroville development, its ideals and Auroville Master Plan area such that the land use, zoning and other**

spaces in and around Auroville as envisaged in the Auroville Master Plan are as far as possible secured, protected, safely regulated, statutorily kept and positively enforceable.

- c) The Secretary, Auroville Foundation may co-opt 2 to 3 persons who have the requisite knowledge, expertise and interest in this field of work to support him in this important work of promotion and protection of Auroville Master Plan and its future developments. The Governing Board will expect a quarterly report regarding progress in this important matter.

10. Position of pending legal cases:

It was decided that a panel of lawyers may be finalized at the earliest in consultation with Dr. Parameswaran and the current position/update may be circulated to all the members.

11. Electrical Sub-Station for Auroville:

The item was discussed and approved in the special meeting of the Board held on 26th August, 2019 and noted in the Minutes of that meeting.

12. Items proposed by the Working Committee:

- 1) Topics proposed by Governing Board members for discussion*
- 2) International Advisory Council*
- 3) Rules Auroville Foundation*

Governing Board shared the concerns of the Working Committee about delay in the reconstitution of the International Advisory Council and the Rules of the Auroville Foundation.

- 4) Organization. (With Working Committee, Auroville Council, Residents' Assembly Service)*
 - a. Overview.*
 - b. Role of Residents' Assembly.*
 - c. Selection process.*
 - d. Standing Order # 1/2019 re the Town Development Council.*

Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Member of the Board, had sent her detailed observations to the Working Committee on the functioning of the Residents Assembly and its

constituted working groups, the selection process for the working groups including the Working Committee. In her report to the Board she has highlighted that the basic problem with the Residents Assembly is total lack of accountability and clarity of any of the “working groups” including the Working Committee. The main problem with Auroville Residents Assembly administration seems to be lack of identified leadership among the members and allocation of clear mandate for working and responsibility for action. She observed that the Residents Assembly Service can be identified as a Nodal Agency which can be made more effective.

The Board observed that the participation of the Residents in the decision making or selection process is far from satisfactory. Taking note of the detailed observations made by Dr. Prema Nandakumar, the Board advised the Working Committee to explore ways of organising the community to mobilize participation in the Residents Assembly meetings and to facilitate the decision making processes. It is reported that the quorum for the decision making is only 10% of the registered Residents of about 2,300, which seems low and not representative of the community. This needs to be revised to at least 20%.

5) Town planning. (With Town Development Council, Working Committee).

a. Planning works

b. GOI Grants

6) Land protection and New Town Development Authority. (With Land Protection Group, Working Committee, Town Development Council?)

7) Consolidating the lands for Auroville. (With Land Board, Funds and Assets Management Committee, Working Committee).

a. Appointment external agency.

b. Protection for Aurovilians.

c. Requesting GB support.

The Governing Board noted the concerns of the Working Committee, TDC and FAMC regarding the encroachments and unwanted developments in the Master Plan Area which are threatening the very existence and survival of the International Township of Auroville. The proposal for land use regulations and protection either

through NTDA or any such mechanism has been under debate and discussion with the Residents Assembly for more than 7 years but have not come up with any sensible measures that can offer protection to the Township against the unwanted development and encroachments.

8) *Fundraising. (With Funds and Assets Management Committee, Working Committee)*

9) *GOI grants. (With GOI Grants Group, Funds and Assets Management Committee, Working Committee)*

It was informed that fund raising either for land or for building the Township has to be with the knowledge of the Board and reports of the funds raised and utilisation be submitted to the Board periodically. The Board enquired as to who had constituted the GoI group and whether any permission / approval from the Board or the Secretary has been taken to which it was replied that the Working Committee had constituted this group with representatives from FAMC and Unity Fund and has started reporting to the Secretary, AF since a year. The Governing Board categorically informed that the GFR and all applicable rules for TA / DA etc., have to be strictly adhered to and cannot allow any laxity in its implementation.

The Board directed that the draft Works Manual which is under preparation be referred to any Chief Engineer of CPWD for vetting. Also they advised that Shri. B. S. Satyanarayan be nominated on the GoI Group.

10) *The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. (With Internal Complaints Committee, Working Committee) (see also section 11 of the Working Committee Report to the Governing Board)*

The Board noted the report and the present dilemma as to who can be deemed as “employer” and also the definition of “work place” in terms of the Act. It was also informed by the current ICC constituted by the Working Committee as “employer”, has not been operating since the question of employer has been objected to. They also mentioned that there are one or two complaints which have come to their notice. This question has several legal complexities and options which need to be further explored

with legal experts. The current ICC can take up the pending complaints, until new arrangements are made.

The Board advised that a workshop on the subject can be organised to arrive at legally tenable decision by inviting experts and legal advisors in the field. Simultaneously the Office of the Secretary may seek advice from the Ministry of Law through MHRD to see if existing trusts can be “Employers”.

11) Auroville Foundation (Admission and Termination of Persons on the Register of Residents) Regulations 2019 (With Auroville Council, Entry Board, Working Committee, Exit policy Task Force)

The Board shared the concerns and assured that they would move urgently to have the objectionable clause in the Form – I (at para 5) removed.

12) Moving toward strategic communication. (With Outreach Media and Auroville.org. web services)

13) Funds and Assets Management topics. (With Funds and Assets Management Committee, Working Committee).

14) 100% 80G. (With Working Committee and Funds and Assets Management Committee)

The Board noted the scope of work of the Outreach Media and Web Services. It now appears that the emails of the Auroville Foundation Office are being hacked and information leaked. This is viewed very seriously. The Board directed the Secretary, AF that necessary corrective and investigative measures should be taken against those who are involved through appropriate Cyber Crime Agencies.

Reports of the FAMC and the Working Committee on the above points have been noted by the Board.

15) Affiliation request of the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR) Trust, Puducherry, to Auroville. (With Working Committee and Funds and Assets Management Committee)

The Board discussed the advantages of having a collaboration with higher educational institutes like SACAR and advised that SAIIER should explore a possible tie up through a MoU or such arrangements to benefit the students of Auroville. This

should be reported back to the Board. The idea as to open up post 12 class students to the possibility of pursuing higher studies in Sri Aurobindo and related studies.

13.The “Entry & Exit” Regulations: Auroville Foundation (Admission and Termination of Persons on the Register of Residents) Regulations 2019

“Para 5 of Form – I

No ownership of property is a respected collective value in Auroville. All immovable assets are owned by the Auroville Foundation which holds them in trust for humanity as a whole. Residents undertake not to own any immovable assets in the City area of the Auroville Master Plan.”

The Governing Board had received the feedback from the community through the Working Committee that more than 500 signatories have objected to the last line of para 5 of Form – I Annexure to the Regulations 2019 as above. In view of the serious concern expressed by the members of the Residents Assembly, which are shared by the Board, it was unanimously decided to recommend to the MHRD to remove the offending sentence which is against the principles of the Charter of Auroville.

In the meantime before the above amendment to the Form – I is officially approved, the Governing Board directs the Secretary, AF that no such proposals from any Residents of Auroville should be approved.

14.Establishment Matters: -----

15.Any other items with the permission of the Chair:

a) **Shri. Mohan Verghese Chunkath, Secretary, Auroville Foundation:** The Governing Board resolved to place on record their appreciation for the valuable sincere services rendered by Shri. Mohan Verghese Chunkath, I.A.S., (Rtd.) who demitted office on 12th June, 2019 after as Secretary, AF.

b) **Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advance Research (SACAR):** The Board decided to advice SAIER to explore the possibilities for a collaboration with SACAR.

It was also emphasised that there should be no financial and other obligations created for the Foundation.

c) The Board noted the contents of the Secretary's Report:

- a. **Report of the Oversight Committee** – Members of the Oversight Committee presented their recommendations on Works Manuals, Codes and Standards, Pool of Qualified Auroville Units and External Parties, Tendering, Monitoring, Architect Fees, Urban Planning and Design, etc., The Board appreciated the work being done by Oversight Committee with inputs from technical and professional experts as and when needed.

The Board also noted and agreed with the recommendation that all programs and projects of the Auroville Foundation should be aligned with the larger program of building the Auroville Township within a time frame and as per the Auroville Master Plan.

All residents of Auroville are expected to contribute towards the realisation of this goal.

- b. **GoI Funding and Utilization** – Office bearers of all the committees who are receiving the maintenance should follow the GFR and adhere to the TA / DA Rules while utilising GoI grants for the purpose. The Board reiterated that the procedure for utilisation of Plan Grants as approved under item 4 of the 47th Meeting of the Governing Board, should strictly be followed and directed the Secretary, AF to report compliance.
- c. **Internal Audit and Centralised Accounting Server** – Board noted, that the present Internal Audit conducted by the FAMC seems to address only partially the requirements which needs to be studied. In the meantime, the services of Shri. Satyanarayan, Expenditure Officer should be fully utilised for the proper utilisation of Government Grant and the Internal Audit.

- d. Issues of Substance Abuse – The Board directed the Working Committee to submit a factual report on this issue for taking appropriate action.
- e. Public Grievance Officer – Governing Board approved the proposal to find a suitable person for this important task, if necessary from within the Community.
- f. Auroville Foundation Office at Puducherry – a volunteer may be employed to do part time service.

It was decided to hold the next meeting of the Board on 09th, 10th and 11th of January, 2020.

Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.
