



Auroville: An Experiment Under Threat

Draws Strong Public Response in Puducherry

PUDUCHERRY, 11th & 12th July 2026 - “Auroville: An Experiment Under Threat”, a two-day public exhibition at Villa Sentosa, concluded in Puducherry with strong visitor engagement, attendance by 20 media representatives and more than 150 registrations for future updates.

Following an inaugural exhibition in Chennai on 6 June, the event combined photographs, reports, official correspondence, maps, testimonies and art installations examining Auroville’s development from 1968 to the profound crisis that began in 2021 following the appointment of Mdm. Jayanthi Ravi as Secretary to the Auroville Foundation.

PHOTOGRAPHIC TIMELINE - FROM DREAM TO NIGHTMARE

At the heart of the exhibition was a chronological photographic timeline highlighting achievements in ecological restoration, community building and participatory governance, tracing more than six decades of Auroville’s evolution before documenting recent institutional and environmental changes.

A series of photographs documented the ongoing environmental destruction, while aerial drone imagery illustrated roads constructed over the past five years that organisers say end abruptly and remain disconnected. Visitors could study the material directly and speak with residents.

DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL

The exhibition presented an extensive body of documentary evidence through photographs, videos, official correspondence, reports, maps, books, publications and supporting material. Visitors were invited to examine the issues firsthand, engage directly with the material, ask questions and draw their own conclusions..

An extensive display of documentary material titled, *“Dreamweaving the Crown”*, showcased photographs documenting the intensive three-month community process, conducted from January to March 2022, and involving more than 70 participants, including architects, town planners, residents and external consultants, to plan Auroville’s Crown Road.

Organisers contrasted this collaborative process with the current implementation of the Crown Road under the Secretary’s purview, which they say neither built upon decades of community planning nor took forward the outcomes of the 2022 Dreamweaving process. The exhibit directly addressed the claim by the current administration that residents oppose growth and the building of the city; the wealth of in-depth studies and innovative proposals presented challenged that claim.

Another extensive display of documentary material focused on *Annapurna*, one of Auroville’s largest organic farms. Organisers say that 100-acres of this farm was leased by the Secretary, Auroville foundation to IIT Madras for a nominal rent of Re. 1 for a period of 33 years, with a possibility of a further 33 years extension. Through official documents and supporting material, the exhibit argued that Auroville’s lands, consolidated over decades through donations from devotees and well-wishers inspired by The Mother’s vision, and held in trust for humanity, are, according to organisers, being unlawfully transferred or exchanged, raising serious questions about the stewardship of these assets.

ART INSTALLATION

Among the most discussed exhibits was an immersive art installation that hung more than 40 official reports by the Town Development Council (TDC as constituted by the Residents’ Assembly) from the ceiling, symbolising residents’ concerns that years of documented recommendations and community processes have gone unanswered by the administration.

11 PUBLIC CLAIMS EXAMINED

Visitors also had the opportunity to examine eleven public claims made by the Secretary’s Office over the past five years, alongside residents’ documented responses and supporting evidence presented at the exhibition.

Throughout the exhibition, the artistic presentation of evidence sought not only to inform, but also to create space for reflection, dialogue and independent enquiry.

THE 4 MAJOR THREATS TO AUROVILLE

Organisers highlighted four major threats facing the community since the current administration took over in 2021:

1	Environmental destruction
2	Violence: Alleged intimidation and violence against community members, including women
3	Atithi-Slave-o-Bhava: Insecurity involving visas, residency, housing and livelihoods
4	Loot of Auroville Property: Alleged irregularities concerning land and other Auroville property

LIVE MUSIC FINALE

The exhibition concluded with an evening of live music celebrating solidarity, resilience and the enduring spirit of Auroville's founding aspiration.

ORGANISERS SAY

Public engagement remained high throughout the event. Visitors spent considerable time exploring the exhibits, examining the documentary material and speaking directly with residents about the issues presented.

More than an exhibition, the event became a meeting place for concerned residents, neighbours and visitors to engage in thoughtful conversations about governance, the environment, participatory decision-making, legal questions, rights, natural justice and spirituality.

Organisers described the strong spirit of solidarity evident throughout the two days as one of the exhibition's most encouraging outcomes.

Organisers expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the many residents, volunteers, artists and well-wishers whose collective effort and support made the exhibition possible.

They also extended their deep appreciation to **Piyush Manush from Salem**, whose steadfast support, experience and guidance have been invaluable in helping concerned residents safely navigate the mounting challenges presently facing Auroville.

Special thanks were extended to the Villa Sentosa team for their warm hospitality and generous support in hosting the exhibition, and to musicians **Kirtana Krishna, Ronny Lahiri and Lochan Baratakke**, whose live performance brought the event to a memorable close.

"This exhibition was never about asking people to take sides,"

said organiser Mandakini Skoles. "It was about making evidence accessible, inviting people to ask questions, and opening an informed conversation about what is at stake, not only for Auroville, but for any living experiment and future alternative that seeks to serve humanity."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES & PARTICIPATION

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