

Rent Agreement and fire safety

In March 2020 Antara agreed to lease a guest house from SK Hotels to launch its Care Home for Seniors in Greater Kailash, Delhi, on a monthly rent of 1.2 million rupees (\$14,400).

At the time, the fire safety system and some of the water hoses in the guest house were not working and the building didn't have the required fire safety certificate.

Antara was to take over the building after the owners had carried out those and other repairs at an estimated cost of 2.5 million rupees (\$30,000).

In the rent agreement that kicked in from October 1, 2020, the monthly rent was reduced to 1.07 million rupees (\$12,800) and the repair work was deleted.

Antara did not respond to Al Jazeera's queries if this work had been carried out.

Instead of applying for a fire safety certificate, Antara's chief operations officer Ishan Bummi applied to the municipal authority for a change in the building's use -- from a guest house to 'poly-clinic and hostel'. The latter did not need a fire safety certificate.

Antara's request was granted in March 2021, three months after it had launched its care home facility. In the interim, it did not have a fire safety certificate.

Sun Power and a pressure switch

In June 2022, Antara engaged Sun Power Company to maintain the electrical equipment at two of its facilities, including the Care Home for Seniors in Greater Kailash.

Sun Power gave Antara a list of 10 things that needed to be repaired or changed at its Greater Kailash facility for a cost of a little more than 300,000 rupees (\$3,600). The list included work on the fire safety system and installing a new pressure pump motor with a pressure switch and gauge.

Though Antara's agreement stated that Sun Power shall be "solely responsible for execution of the scope of work", as per the documents submitted by Antara to the police, it got a new pressure switch installed five months later, in December, by another company. On

December 31, 2022, when Sun Power's Rajesh checked the new pressure switch attached to the water tank and the fire safety system, it was malfunctioning.

'Urgent Calling'

Baba Sahab told Al Jazeera that around 9pm on December 31, when he was with his grandmother, he heard "urgent calling, urgent calling" beaming from the Nursing Station on the third floor, next to the lift. The "urgent" message comes when "a call has not been answered even after five minutes", an official of Process Care Systems, which had been given the contract to maintain the Nurse Call System at Antara, told Al Jazeera.

Baba said that on hearing the "urgent calling" message, he telephoned Keshav Raj, the centre head, and told him that "the resident in the next room [Kanchan Arora in Room 301] is ringing for an attendant". When no one turned up and the "urgent calling" message kept beaming, Baba says that after about 15 minutes, he made another call to Raj and only then someone went to attend to Kanchan Arora.

Six witnesses, four different accounts

Srishti, the night attendant hired from Max @ Home services for Kamal Kumar in Room 302, is the only alleged witness to where and when the fire started. December 31, 2022, was her second day on duty with Kamal Kumar.

According to Srishti's account, a little after 4:30am, when she saw the fire in Kamal Kumar's room 302, she ran down to the first-floor nursing station to get help.

According to the statements of other staff, five people rushed up with her — two nurses, two GDAs (General Duty Assistant) and Antara's security guard — and there are four different accounts of what they saw and did.

Srishti has said in her statement and maintains that no one could help or enter Kamal Kumar's room because the fire had spread to the lobby.

One GDA who came up with Srishti says that the two of them entered Kamal's room but could not save her because of the flames.

One nurse says that she and a colleague tried to enter Room 302 to rescue Kamal, but could not because of the flames.

The guard says he went to Room 302, opened the door and saw Kamal Kumar screaming but could not enter.


The police report does not question the discrepancies in the witness statements.

‘Did your mother spend the night out?’

On the morning of January 1, 2023, Dr Shabnam Mir, who leads clinical operations at Antara Assisted Care, telephoned Kanchan Arora’s younger daughter, Mandakini, in New York at 6:37am (India time) to ask, “Did your mother spend the night out? ... She was neither in her room nor in her bathroom.”

Mandakini told the police about this phone call and mentioned it in her statement, but neither Dr Mir nor anyone else from Antara has been questioned by the police about why their staff did not know where Kanchan Arora was on the night of the fire.

The testimonial of ‘Mrs Lakshmi Krishnan’



The graphic features a photograph of Mrs. Lakshmi Krishnan, an elderly woman in a green and gold saree. To her right is a quote in English: "Antara Care At Home has exceeded my expectations in every way. The doctors are not only highly skilled but also genuinely caring. They take the time to listen to my concerns and provide tailored solutions. The caregivers are friendly, efficient, and have become like a part of my extended family. Thanks to Antara, I no longer have to worry about the hassle of hospital visits". Above the quote are five stars and the signature "Mrs. Lakshmi Krishnan". Below the signature is the text "Antara Care at Home Customer". To the right of the quote is the Antara logo, which consists of three colorful circles and the word "ANTARA" above "A Max Group Company".

The graphic also includes a screenshot of a social media post from "antaraseniorecare". The post text reads: "antaraseniorecare Unveiling the heartwarming journey of a senior who found solace and joy in Antara's Care at Home services in Bengaluru. Thank you, ma'am, for trusting us and becoming a precious part of our family. For more information, call +91 98114 41111 #SeniorCareStartsWithAntara #ElderCare #PositiveLifestyle #HealthyLifestyle #AntaraCareServices #CareIruvaSambandha #Bengaluru 1d". The post shows 18 likes and is from 1 day ago.

Antara, a market leader in elder care in India, runs retirement homes, assisted care living facilities, and memory care homes for patients with dementia and recently launched a 'care at home' service in India's IT city Bengaluru for which it has been running customer testimonials on its social media accounts.

Al Jazeera checked one such testimonial by "Mrs Lakshmi Krishnan, Antara Care Home Customer", where she says, "Antara Care at Home has exceeded my expectations in every way. The doctors are not only highly skilled but also genuinely caring. They take care to listen to my concerns and provide tailored solutions."

Al Jazeera asked Antara for the contact details of "Mrs Lakshmi Krishnan", but received no response.

Al Jazeera ran a reverse image search and found that the alleged Mrs Lakshmi Krishnan is a generic, stock image from a photo service (depositphotos.com) titled, "Aged Indian Woman".

Last checked, the photo and testimonial are no longer available on Antara's Facebook or Instagram accounts.

Suparna Sharma