

Avid Learning Amplifies Voices of Cultural Sustainability and Environmental Innovation at COP28 UAE

As India completes its **G20 Presidency**, it has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to **sustainable energy solutions and climate action**. As the host nation, India stood as an exemplar, showcasing that the fight against climate change transcends borders and is a collective endeavor that demands action and dialogue.

Avid Learning, the cultural philanthropy arm of the **Essar Group** is proud to participate at the global stage of **COP28 UAE - United Nations Climate Change Conference**, scheduled from 30 November to 12 December 2023 at Expo City, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Founded in 2009 by **Mrs. Madhu Ruia**, Avid Learning has established itself as a pioneering and one of the leading arts and cultural programming platforms in the country. The COP28 conference will be attended by heads of state, government officials, industry leaders, academics, and representatives from civil society organizations.

*"At the prestigious COP28 UAE, Avid Learning proudly stands as a torchbearer for **cultural sustainability and environmental innovation**. Our commitment to leveraging the **transformative power of arts and culture** aligns with our vision for a **greener future**. We champion the fusion of culture and climate consciousness, amplifying marginalized voices while addressing pressing environmental concerns. At Avid Learning, we believe in the profound impact of art in fostering dialogue, raising awareness, and driving action toward a more sustainable tomorrow"* says **Mrs. Madhu Ruia**, Chairperson of Avid Learning.

Avid Learning is presenting **two programs in the Green Zone** at COP28 in line with the conference's cross-cutting themes of **technology and innovation, inclusion, frontline communities, and finance**. This special endeavor is the continued convergence of two of Avid Learning's most acclaimed programming series: **Sustainability Now** and **Uncovering Urban Legacies**.

*"I strongly believe in the power of the arts to impact change. As environmental concerns continue to grow worldwide, we at AVID find it imperative to shed light on such issues and leverage our platform to educate and spread awareness through the arts. In this respect, we launched the **Sustainability Now** series in April 2020, a themed and targeted series of discussions aiming to convert audiences into change-makers, active catalysts, and custodians of a greener tomorrow. To date, we have presented around **60+ change makers and speakers**, curated **50+ programs**, and presented an illustrated children's book"* says **Asad Lalljee**, CEO of Avid Learning and Curator of Royal Opera House, Mumbai.

In 2021, Avid Learning conceptualized the **Uncovering Urban Legacies** series, a captivating exploration of small yet unique communities and their profound cultural legacies that have historically, economically, and socio-culturally shaped the vibrant trading port city of Bombay. This series has embarked on a journey to unravel the stories of **eight diasporas** and their intricate influence on the city's landscape. The most recent installment delved into the original inhabitants of the city, the **Kolis**.

Avid Learning has a long-established relationship with the vibrant city of Dubai and eagerly anticipates the continuation of its collaboration with the cultural hub. The journey began in 2012 and extended into 2013 when Avid Learning sponsored and supported **The Hatch**, a screening room and center created at the heart of the **Art Dubai** fair. The dedicated space featured a rolling program of artists' talks,

presentations, and film and video screenings. In 2018 Avid Learning facilitated a leading not-for-profit organization to support the opening night of Taj Express, an internationally acclaimed cultural program of Indian origin at the prestigious **Dubai Opera House**.

Event Details:

Program 1 Climate Warriors and Their Pathways to Sustainable Solutions

A dynamic conversation with dedicated climate champions and visionary entrepreneurs working for environmental solutions, including, **Kaustubh Padakannaya**, *Co-Founder, Pyse*, **Ashay Bhave**, *Social Entrepreneur and Founder, Thaely*, and **Rewant Ruia**, *Director, Essar Group*. The speakers will discuss the role of education in climate change mitigation, sustainable entrepreneurship, investment in green assets, the increasingly important transition to Green Energy, Green Steel, and expected future trends with the moderator **Mairu Gupta**, *Founder & CEO, Antkind*.

When: Friday, 8th December, 2023 | 1:00 PM – 1:40 PM

Where: Terra Auditorium

Program 2 Koli Fishermen of Bombay: Guardians of Cultural Sustainability

A vibrant musical, celebrating the Kolis, the indigenous inhabitants of Bombay, and their profound connection with the sea. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Mumbai's coastline, the unique performance pays a heartfelt tribute to the rich Koli culture and heritage. It also highlights their resilience in the face of the most urgent challenges like climate change, industrialization, and overfishing, while demonstrating their commitment to marine conservation. The production is led by **Parag Tandel**, *Artist and Visual Auto-Ethnographer of Koli Community*, **Yuki Ellias**, *Actor and Theatre & Film Producer*, and **Tej Arun Chandiwale**, *Choreographer*.

When: Friday, 8th December, 2023 | 5:30 PM – 6:15 PM

Where: Green Zone Stage

Celebrate the cultural richness of the Kolis and get inspired by visionary climate champions to contribute toward the collective efforts to address climate change and build a more sustainable future.

Press: Ayesha Dadachanji (ayeshah.avid@gmail.com)

Register at: <https://greenzonepass.cop28.com/>

About Speakers:

Kaustubh Padakannaya

Kaustubh is an engineer turned entrepreneur, with 7+ years of experience building products in the social and environmental impact space. With experience in affordable med-tech, ed-tech, and renewable energy, he is now building Pyse to make individual climate action accessible, affordable, and rewarding.

Ashay Bhave

Ashay is a social entrepreneur, designer, and artist of Indian origin. He has studied footwear design at FIT, New York, and entrepreneurship at Amity University, Dubai. His works have been showcased in the Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi, and Tashkeel, Dubai to name a few. He's primarily known for founding the brand Thaely. Thaely is the world's first 100% recycled and vegan footwear company.

Rewant Ruia

As a member of the founding family of Essar, Rewant has developed considerable knowledge and experience in the oil & gas, refining, metals & mining, and infrastructure sectors. His global exposure, fresh perspectives, and arc of activities have contributed to Essar's strategy and operations. Rewant has been focused on Essar's expansion in overseas markets and has been involved in identifying and investing in new business opportunities for the group. He is focused on Essar's greenfield expansion, acquisition opportunities in core economy sectors, as well as strategic operations across Essar's investments. His understanding of global markets helps drive the strategy of Essar as well as complex financings and transactions. Rewant's aspiration is to transition the organizational portfolio from assets built over the last fifty years to assets that are state-of-the-art and relevant for the next fifty years.

Mairu Gupta (Moderator)

Mairu is a media & tech executive with 15 years of experience in scaling both corporate and early-stage companies across advertising, sports, music and blockchain. He is currently the Founder & CEO of Antkind - a digital communications collective for brands focused on climate action & sustainability. Most recently he led the Polygon-incubated Layer-E, where he launched Flipkart's decentralized metaverse. Previously, Mairu led the digital business for Sony Music across South Asia and before that, Mairu was part of the NBA founding team in India and led their content and media distribution business through a 5-year stint. Earlier in his career, he spent 8 years in advertising agencies such as Saatchi & Saatchi, Young & Rubicam, and Jack in the Box, among others.

About Artists:

Parag Tandel

Parag is a visual auto-ethnographer who archives what he perceives around him and his relationship with the scenery he inhabits. His visual art and socially engaged art practices are raising issues of loss and identity. He is archiving prevailing circumstances and intervening in the oral narratives regarding the colonial and imperial history of the Fisherfolks of Mumbai. Tandel earned a Diploma in Creative Sculpture from M. S University, Baroda (2005) after completing a Diploma in sculpture and modeling from Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai (2003). Tandel's solo exhibitions include Chronicle at TARQ, Mumbai (2016) and Autopolisphilia curated by Noopur Desai at Sudarshan Art Gallery, Pune, India

(2018) as well as Pregnant Room 1 and Pregnant Room 2, both showcased at Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai (2008 & 2010).

Yuki Ellias

Yuki is a communications expert, executive coach, and consultant for business leaders across the globe. She leverages 20 years of experience as an actor and director, bringing tools from the stage and the creative processes to leaders - enabling them to engage their teams and clients with more creativity, courage and impact. As an instructional designer, she has developed a manual for leadership development solutions. This includes business storytelling, executive presence, and building stronger client relationships. Her trainings facilitate skills relevant to trust and negotiation, growth mindset and behaviours and support crucial conversations. Her clients span across industries and include banking, consulting, ITES, pharma, FMCG, law, auto, media and retail. Yuki is also a multi award winning actor and producer. She has toured the world with her shows and performed at leading venues and festivals. She was the pedagogical adviser and teacher at the Drama School Mumbai and is currently a member of the Board of Studies at Wilson College, Mumbai.

Tej Arun Chandiwale

Tej Chandiwale, Vice President of Kalakar Institution of Dance has represented India on several platforms all over the world for International festivals since the last two decades. He has been associated with the Bollywood film industry as a Choreographer and as Assistant choreographer to Mr.Devang Desai, Mr.Adil Shaikh, Miss. Shabina Khan, to Longines Fernandez and many such prominent choreographers in the field of Indian Cinema. Kalakar dance group has been associated with CIOFF (UNESCO) for representing folklore festivals in Europe in almost every consecutive year since 1985. It has also been associated with ICCR to perform dances of India for the Indian community in South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius.

About Avid Learning:

Avid Learning is Essar's cultural philanthropy arm and India's leading arts and cultural programming platform. Founded in 2009, over the past decade and counting, Avid Learning has presented over 1600 multiverse and hybrid programs, domestically and internationally. With a vision to democratise the arts, create new audiences, and deepen engagement in India's burgeoning creative sector, Avid Learning thoughtfully curates diverse events that embrace the spirit of collaboration.

It brings together the best of Indian and international think tanks, artists, intellectuals, cultural experts, and policymakers across a variety of multidisciplinary genres and new-age topics in Visual & Performing Arts, Literature, Culture & Heritage, Education, and Design & Technology. In all its efforts, Avid Learning stands true to its motto that #LearningNeverStops.

About Essar Group:

Essar Global Fund Limited (EGFL) is a global investor that invests in building and nurturing world-class assets diversified across the core sectors of **Energy** (comprising of Energy Transition, Exploration & Production, Refining & Marketing, and Power businesses), **Infrastructure & Logistics** (comprising Ports, Projects and Green Mobility businesses), **Metals & Mining** (Green Steel project and DRI pellets)

and **Technology & Retail** (comprising Shipping, Oilfield services, Technology Solutions and FnV Retail).

EGFL portfolio companies have aggregate revenues of **US\$15 billion** and employ over 7,000 people. Its investments are managed by **Essar Capital** which monitors the entire portfolio of investments owned by EGFL.

Essar is now poised to transition its existing assets towards a greener economy and invest in businesses that will transform sector landscapes from carbon to a clean energy ecosystem.

Some of Essar's new projects include building the United Kingdom's first \$1 billion blue hydrogen project at its Stanlow refinery site; production of green hydrogen and green ammonia in India; and development of a 4-million tons per annum green steel facility in the Middle East region.

Essar Foundation, the CSR arm of Essar has a rich heritage of 50 years of service to Pan-India; in health, education, livelihood, women empowerment, sports, environment, and infrastructure.