

**Painting and Photographic Exhibition and Handicraft and Pakistan Food Festival on Tuesday 6 September 2022 at Islamic Cultural Centre**

Your Excellency Mr. Pathan, High Commissioner of Pakistan

I present my compliments and congratulations to the President, the government and the population of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the occasion of 75 anniversary of the independence of their state.

I also express my sympathy to the population of The Republic of Pakistan who is experiencing very severe floods causing severe casualties and property losses. I know that you will overcome that grievous period and come out more resilient.

Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen

It is with an immense pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to inaugurate the Exhibition and Pakistan Food Festival. These activities fall within the Pakistan Week organised by High Commission of Pakistan to mark the 75th Independence anniversary of Pakistan and the 55th diplomatic anniversary between Mauritius and Pakistan.

Thank you Your Excellency Mr. Pathan for the organisation of this Pakistan Week with a myriad of activities aiming at depicting the various facets of your country.

Pakistan and Mauritius diplomatic relations are spread over 55 years. This relationship has been based on shared culture, tradition, language and religion.

During these years that have elapsed, Pakistan-Mauritius relations have matured into a stable friendship. Ours is an all-weather friendship, which has withstood the test of time. This friendship exists not just between governments but between our peoples who whole heartedly support this relationship.

Our two countries have always supported one another diplomatically at various multilateral forums. We will always remember Pakistan support to Mauritius at the UN over its stand on the Chagos and voted in favour of Mauritius.

The government of Pakistan offers assistance to Mauritian students for Post Graduate and Undergraduate degrees and courses in various fields including Medicine, Engineering, B. Pharmacy, Banking and Dentistry.

The visit of Pakistani Ophthalmologists to Mauritius for the last 12 years to perform free of charge eye surgeries has greatly helped the deserving patients.

Economic relations between our two countries are growing at a steady pace.

Excellency, I have read with great interest your interview in one of our dailies during which you stated that your focus will be on boosting bilateral trade.

This one-week celebration offers a great opportunity for the Mauritians to join the festivities and entertainments that the High Commission of Pakistan is offering in terms of film festivals, exhibitions, food festivals, sports activities, among others.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Art nurtures creativity, innovation and cultural diversity for all peoples across the globe and plays an important role in sharing knowledge and encouraging curiosity and dialogue. These are qualities that art has always had, and will always have if we continue to support environments where artists and artistic freedom are promoted and protected.

Art can unite and connect us even in the most difficult of circumstances. Indeed, the power of art to bring people together, to inspire, heal and share, has become increasingly clear during recent conflicts and crises, including COVID-19.

Pakistan is an old world civilization with a rich history of art and culture. The world of its craftspeople, with their handmade goods and textiles, spans millennia and encompasses influences of many civilizations - Indus, Persian, and Turkic within it.

There are many famous Pakistan-born artists. I can mention, among others, Ismail Gulgee - an award winning, globally famous artist who is renowned for his extraordinary works in calligraphy, his phenomenal paintings and sculptures. Another Pakistan's most celebrated artist is Saeed Akhtar, although he is colour blind.

We shall have the opportunity to appreciate the works of some artists, photographers and craftsmen in an exhibition which I shall have the pleasure to inaugurate in a few minutes

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Food is one of the biggest necessities of human existence. Mauritius, where the ethnic diversity of the local people is reflected in its cuisine, is a true paradise for the palate and the senses.

Every country has its own speciality in its food and so does Pakistan. Our Muslim countrymen, whose forefathers originated from Pakistan, have maintained that flavour of the Pakistan cuisine and share it with all of us. Among the biggest contributions of Muslims to the Mauritian food scene, we have the famous Briyani, Haleem and Kalia, without forgetting the Vermicelli which is shared between friends and neighbours on the occasion of the Eid festival.

I can notice that talking about all these dishes makes your mouth water.

I shall therefore conclude by inviting many people to come and visit the exhibitions and enjoy the Pakistan Food Festival, which I shall now inaugurate