

Award Ceremony for Arabic Competition organised by the Arabic Speaking Union at Auditorium Octave Wiehé on Sunday 03 December 2023 at 13:30 hrs

Honourable Dr Anwar Husnoo, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government

Mr. Sheikh Goolam Mohammad, President of the Arabic Speaking Union and Board Members of the Arabic Speaking Union

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

I am honoured to associate myself with this Award Ceremony of the Arab Speaking Union.

I shall start with an Arabic proverb which says “**The best speech is one that is short and to the point**”. I shall therefore try to abide by it.

Nowadays, Arabic is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and it represents a true pillar of diversity, spoken in its varying forms by over 400 million people in 25 countries.

It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

It is universally recognized that Arabic is one of the few languages which have played a catalytic role in culture, science and the arts throughout history.

Languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development, are of strategic importance for people and for the planet.

However, due to globalization processes, they now find themselves increasingly threatened, or even disappear completely.

Ladies and gentlemen

When languages become extinct, cultural diversity, which is the richness of humanity, also fades. Along with languages, in fact, it is also perspectives, traditions, collective memory and unique modes of thought and expression – all valuable resources for guaranteeing a better future – that are lost.

Languages are treasures. They are priceless, and the loss of any language is a loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of years of memory, history, skills and knowledge about people and places. When a language disappears or becomes endangered, the stakes are much deeper than any recoverable material loss.

Since the 1980s, the language education policy of successive Mauritian governments has been to encourage the teaching of ancestral languages as part of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Mauritians.

Besides, Government has set up Speaking Unions for many of these languages, including Arabic.

I would like to congratulate those Speaking Unions which are committed to the promotion of their respective languages because there is nothing more noble than sacrificing for our languages, the basis of our cultural identity.

I must congratulate all those students who took Arabic as a subject for the Cambridge examinations. Though they are few, yet they achieved remarkable results. For instance, last year 82 % passed in Arabic at School Certificate and the success rate for those offering this subject at Principal Level at HSC was 100%.

I congratulate also all those who will be rewarded today for their achievements in Arabic.

Ladies and gentlemen

I shall conclude by borrowing a poem from that great universal poet Mirza Ghalib, to wish you all a Happy New Year 2023

Let the old year out.
Welcome the new one in.
Bury the bad things of the past
As a new year now begins.

Pray for health and happiness.
Pray for your fellow man.
Pray for all the ones you love.
Pray for those who've lost their way.

So, my best wishes to you all.

I hope I have been faithful to the proverb.

Thank you