

Ambassador's Statement at the Puppet Show

(Beijing, 21 March 2021)

Madam Zhao Jiachen,

Madam Zhao Yongzhuang,

Mr. Jiang Hua, (DDG Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

Mr. Xu Hangtian, (Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ambassador Khek M. Caimealy, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ambassador Noshewan of Malaysia

Ambassador Sha Zukang,

Madam Geng Ying,

Ms. Himulchuli Gurung, (Programme Officer Culture, UNESCO)

Mr. Saadan Peerzada, Rafi Peer Art workshop

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Children,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon, Asalam o Alaikum,

Ni Hao,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome our respected guests to today's celebration of Pakistan-China civilizational and cultural heritage.

How much I wished to be attending this important function physically, but due to unforeseen circumstances that is not possible and therefore I am joining you virtually. However, I am well represented through my wife, Farah; our Deputy Head of Mission, Ahmed Farooq; Counsellor Mariam Saeed, the main focal person of the Embassy and my capable team.

At the outset, I convey my profound thanks to Ms. Zhao Jiachen, Party Secretary and Chairperson of Beijing Performance and Art Group; Ms. Zhao Yongzhuang, Chief Executive of China Puppet Arts Theater; Mr. Saadaan Peerzada, Rafi Peer Theater Workshop; Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China; and UNESCO for coming together to make this celebration of our friendship a success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China has reached a significant milestone. 2021 marks the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between our two brotherly countries.

Our time-tested and ironclad friendship is rooted in shared ethos, mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual trust, and common aspirations for peace, development and prosperity.

Our iron bonds have been strengthened by successive generations of leaders and common folk alike.

The cooperative partnership covers strategic, political, economic, cultural and people-to-people realms.

Looking to future, Pakistan and China are destined to forge together a community of shared future in the New Era.

I am happy that we are joined today by both Pakistani and Chinese children, the torchbearers of our friendship and cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In celebrating the important milestone of our 70th anniversary, Pakistan and China have planned a series of over hundred activities to showcase and cherish every aspect of our multifaceted cooperative partnership throughout the year.

Earlier this month, the Foreign Ministers of our two countries launched the 70th anniversary logo. This logo has been designed by a prominent Chinese artist, Mr. Wang of the Peon Gallery, Beijing. It is an artistic rendition of seventy years of Pakistan-China fraternal ties – red 7 representing China; and green crescent and star for Pakistan come together to form number 70. The metallic texture embodies brotherhood between our two nations.

A website, ironbrothers.pk, was also launched this month to catalog the year-long celebrations. I encourage you all to visit the website.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's event is a display of civilizational and cultural heritage of Pakistan and China through puppetry and related arts.

We are proud to have partnered with China Puppet Art Theater and Rafi Peer Theater Workshop for this wonderful event.

The event coincides with the World Puppetry Day celebrated every year on 21 March.

Arts and Crafts are essential elements of a nation's heritage, traditions and wisdom.

Since millennia, Pakistan and China have been connected through the Ancient Silk Road, an artery for flow of goods, crafts, cultural traditions and a bridge between civilizations.

The intangible civilizational heritage is best preserved in the fine art of puppetry, folklore and story-telling traditions,

contributing to promotion of cultural understanding and linkages.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Puppets, in their different forms, are both entertaining and captivating and are an important aspect of cultural representations, creative history, customs and traditions, and intangible heritage.

Puppetry is an important form of artistic expression that exists in a multitude of forms, and reaches a wide range of audiences, and remains highly diversified with appeal to both old and young alike.

Folk puppet art shows both entertain and educate, particularly children regarding social problems, norms and values.

Puppet shows are conscious efforts to explain socio-cultural issues and nurture a sense of responsibility while providing a valuable educational platform. It is also considered a viable medium to engage people with disabilities, thus being an inclusive form of entertainment and social education.

Puppets stimulate children's imagination, encourage creative play and discovery, and are a wonderful interactive way to introduce culture through combination of stories, poetry and music.

Ladies and gentlemen,

China Puppet Art Theater is keeping the rich tradition of Chinese puppetry alive since 1955. Its skilled artists master the art of shadow puppets, hand puppets, and rod controlled puppets. The depiction of world-renowned folklore of Monkey

King has won it laurels. I am sure you would enjoy their performance today.

Launched in 1978, Rafi Peer Theater Workshop has emerged as a leader in performing arts in Pakistan. It has revived the art of puppetry in the country and rekindled the imaginations of children with its educational series “Sim Sim Hamara”. Rafi Peer’s International Puppet Festival, started in 1992, has seen increasing participation of puppet troupes from around the world.

I congratulate Rafi Peer Theater Workshop and China Puppet Art Theater for signing an MoU of cooperation later in the day. The MoU would surely bolster their collaboration in related fields by artists and industry specialists such as designing and crafting of puppets and developing innovative techniques to preserve the art of puppet-making.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today’s event is historic for many reasons:

First – it is a key celebration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations;

Second – it is the first time ever that traditional art of puppetry from our two countries has come together;

Third, and most importantly – we are today, passing on this baton of tradition and fraternity to our next generation. Presence of our children here bears testimony.

I thank you all again for joining the event and making it a success.