



Kuala Lumpur

Celebration of Culture, History, Arts and Tradition

PIO INTERNATIONAL

FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION | CONFERENCES

In Conjunction With

PIO DAY, KUALA LUMPUR

2nd - 4th June 2023

Vivekananda Ashram & School
Little India Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur



Vivekananda Ashrama
Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur



Malaysian Association of
Indian University Graduates



Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose
Indian Cultural Centre
Kuala Lumpur





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PREFACE

The ethos of the diverse culture of the Indians, its enigma and charm has had a profound impact on people and civilisations across the world. Spread by ancient scholars, traders and empires and in recent years by the PIO diaspora, the Indian culture and traditions and the adopted versions are celebrated in many countries globally.

The PIO International Festival (PIOFest) is a thread of gala events organised to celebrate the arts and culture of the PIOs in Malaysia. This Festival includes musicals, dance, exhibitions, traditional games and conferences. The three days Festival is organised by GOPIO Malaysia in Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur from Friday 2nd June to Sunday 4th June 2023. GOPIO, the Global Organisation of the People of Indian Origin represents the more than 31.2 million PIOs living worldwide.

The PIOs have a rich assortment of varied colourful traditions, revealed through the diverse ethnic culture and arts. The origin of this culture and art forms have deep-rooted historical links that can be traced back to the Indus-Saraswati civilisation over five thousand years ago. The evolution of the Indian multicultural sects has transcended over a period of several millennia.

Each ethnic community has evolved variations of language, attire, arts and food. PIO ethnic communities in Malaysia, namely Tamil, Telugu, Malayali, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Sindhi, Orissa, Kannada and the Melaka Chitty are involved in the organising of this PIOFest. Each of these ethnic Indian communities has its own unique customs while sharing a cohesive commonality, known as Indianness.

Today, Indianness means respect and acceptance of the vast diversities in inter-community relationships. This Unity in Diversity has been the unique pillar of Indian cultural development. This value of rich diversities of many communities living together has impacted and inspired many civilisations and numerous communities throughout Asia, especially among the ASEAN countries.

A Festival is an effective way for communities to showcase their cultural expressions. Artistes, exhibitors and speakers from Mauritius, India, Sri Lanka and Singapore and other nations will join in with the many Malaysian PIO talents, exhibitors and academics during the Festival. The Cultural Performances also include Malay, Chinese, Sabahan and Sarawakian dance forms to promote Malaysian culture, arts and tourism.

"Indian culture is essentially much more of a we culture. It's a communal culture where you do what's best for the community - you procreate". - Aasfi Mandvi





PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN (PIOs)

PIO refers to people who have Indian ancestry and are living outside of India. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, as of 2021, there are approximately 31.2 million PIOs residing in various parts of the world. The Indian diaspora is one of the largest in the world, with millions of Indians moved to various parts of the world over the centuries. PIOs have made significant contributions to the countries they have moved to, in fields such as infrastructure, utilities, administration, plantations, business, medicine, sports, food and arts.

The PIO identity is characterised by this rich diversity of cultures, languages, and traditions and has integrated with local cultures and communities, while also preserving its own cultural heritage. PIOs have also played a key role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding between India and the rest of the world. PIOs have shown resilience and determination in preserving their cultural identity and contributing to their adopted countries amidst great challenges. Many PIOs have been involved in advocacy and activism, and have played pivotal roles in shaping public policy and promoting social justice.

PIO history is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and cultural richness of the Indian diaspora. It reflects the diverse experiences and contributions of PIOs across the world and is also an essential part of India's global identity and of the many countries the PIOs are settled in. PIOs have brought their own unique customs, traditions, music, language, food, arts and other aspects of Indian culture, which have been embraced and celebrated by people around the world.

PIOs have established and assisted commercial activities and start-ups, contributing to the economy by creating businesses and jobs. PIOs have been politically engaged in their adopted countries advocating for issues such as civil rights, and social justice. They have also been active in promoting diplomatic ties and international relations between India and other countries. Many PIOs have also been involved in philanthropic activities, donating their time and resources to social causes and charities. They have established foundations and non-profit organisations that work towards improving the lives of people in need around the world. PIOs are global citizens, with connections and networks spanning across continents. They have a unique perspective and understanding of different cultures, which allows them to navigate diverse environments and contribute to global development. The PIOs have certainly enriched the cultural and social fabric of the countries they live in.

PIOFest is held in conjunction with the first PIO Day celebrations in Malaysia. PIO Day is to recognise the endeavours, sacrifices and contributions of the forefathers of the PIOs in Malaysia. On 9th October 2022, a PIO Day Forum was organised by GOPIO Malaysia and attended by Academics and PIO Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) where a unanimous decision was made to celebrate the PIO Day with festivals and conferences in conjunction with the Asian traditional New Year.

"In writing of Indian culture, I am highly conscious of my own subjectivity; arguably, there is more than one Indian culture and certainly more than one view of Indian culture" - Shashi Tharoor (former diplomat, writer and public intellectual).



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CELEBRATION OF PIO CULTURE, HISTORY, ARTS & TRADITIONS

Culture is the sum of all the forms of art, act and thought. Indian culture is rich and diverse, with a long and complex history spanning thousands of years going back to the Indus Saraswati civilisation. The PIO cultural heritage is a blend of numerous languages, traditions, customs and beliefs, which have over time evolved and are deeply intertwined with each other.

Indian history spans thousands of years and encompasses various civilisations, empires, kingdoms and cultures. These civilisations had advanced technology, trade networks, and urban planning, which had a profound impact on the development of later Indian cultures and their percolation to South East Asia and other parts of the world.

Indian arts are a rich and diverse collection of artistic expressions that reflect the people's cultural heritage and traditions. These arts include classical music, dance, theatre, painting, sculpture, literature, handicrafts, martial arts, and yoga, among others. Indian arts are known for their intricate designs, vibrant colours, and unique styles, and are deeply rooted in spiritual and philosophical traditions.

Indian traditions are deeply rooted in the country's ancient cultural heritage and have evolved to reflect the country's diverse population. These traditions encompass a wide range of customs, beliefs, rituals, and practices, and are an integral part of daily life for millions of people in India and the Indian diaspora at large.

"The Indian way of life provides the vision of a natural, real way of life. We veil ourselves with unnatural masks. On the face of India are the tender expressions which carry the mark of the Creator's hand". - George Bernard Shaw





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PIO MUSICALS, DANCE & DRAMA

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Vivekananda School Grounds, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

The music and dance of the People of Indian Origin can be traced to the Indus Saraswati civilisation and are to the PIOs, divine. Indian music, dance forms and theatre are highly developed art which requires immense discipline and years of training, founded on the Guru-Shishya tradition. Natya Shastra, an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts, encompassing theatre, dance and music was written around 200 BCE in classical India. Essentially, the music, dance and theatre of the PIOs can be divided into three visible varieties; classical, traditional folk and contemporary. Themes are derived from mythology, legends, classical literature, everyday life and nature.

Indian music is a rich and diverse tradition that is characterised by its use of microtones, complex rhythms, improvisation, integration of vocals and instruments, and emphasis on emotion and mood. Folk songs and music are widely used to commemorate important occasions like weddings, childbirth, festivals, etc. Folk music was also employed to transmit important information from one generation to the next. Among the musical melting pots of the modern world, the one that bubbles most merrily may be the Indian film industry, which churns out more than a thousand movies a year. Light and pop music and dance from these movies added to modern dance forms have become extremely popular since the middle of the 20th century. However, movies are a contemporary medium and do not represent the entirety of Indian art.

Indian dance is characterised by its intricate footwork, expressive hand gestures, and complex rhythms. Indian dance often tells a story, with the performer using facial expressions, body movements and Mudra to convey the emotions and themes of the story. Mudras are hand gestures that are used to convey meaning and emotion and each has a specific meaning and is used to depict different characters, emotions, and themes. Indian dance has a strong connection to spirituality and is often performed as a form of worship. The dance movements are intricately synchronized with the music, creating a beautiful and harmonious performance. India is also famous for its folk dances performed by people from different regions of the country which reflect the cultural and social traditions of their communities. Indian movies and Bollywood dance are also popular in India and have gained popularity all over the world. It is a fusion of various dance styles, including classical, folk, and Western dance, and is characterised by energetic and upbeat movements.

Listening to live Indian traditional music and watching their dance and theatre can help people understand the PIO culture better. It represents the history, traditions and thoughts of a community. Indian music, dance and theatre are extremely diverse and express the spiritual and cultural activities of people. PIO musicals, dance and theatre will be showcased on all three days from 2nd to 4th June 2023 at the Vivekananda School Grounds in Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur.

"Indian dance and music are like a river that flows through time, carrying with it the traditions and culture of a rich and diverse civilization. Their rhythms and melodies have the power to stir the soul and touch the heart, transcending language and cultural barriers." - Maurice Béjart

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PIO HERITAGE EXHIBITION

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Kandiah Hall, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

The transcendence and continuity of culture are not only dependent on its practice but also on understanding its history and essence. The PIOfest Heritage Exhibitions is a display of the various historical and cultural heritage of the Indians.

- Ancient and medieval Indian history.
- Indians in South East Asia before the PIOs and the Melaka Chitty community.
- Events that created the PIO world and PIO migration to Malaysia.
- World War II, Indian National Army and Siam Death Railway.
- PIOs in economic activities and nation-building of Malaysia.
- Tamil schools and Temples in Malaysia.
- Prominent PIOs of Malaysia.
- A section each for Tamil, Telugu, Malayali, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Sindhi, Odia, Marathi, Kannada and Melaka Chitty heritage.

Often people neglect the importance of knowing and understanding history. Deemed as sometimes boring and unnecessary it is flipped aside as an appendage, as all eyes are set on the future. Knowing the past is the fundamental bedrock on which the future is built. And though there are many ways of recognising and learning about the past, exhibitions play a crucial role in preserving history and heritage. The exhibition will be open for public viewing throughout the 3 days.

"An arrow can only be shot by pulling it backwards" - Paulo Coelho



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ART DEMONSTRATIONS

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Brickfields Vivekananda School Grounds, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

MARTIAL ARTS

India has a rich history of martial arts, with many different forms and styles developed over the centuries. PIOfest will host demonstrations of Silambam, Kalari Payat and Varma, which are of interest to PIOs in Malaysia and possibly other forms of martial arts. These martial arts developed in India over the centuries and each style has its unique techniques, training methods and cultural significance. Indian martial arts have several special qualities that make them unique and distinctive from other martial arts around the world. Some of the key features of Indian martial arts are an emphasis on spirituality and meditation, a strong connection to Indian culture and history, a wide variety of techniques and styles, a holistic approach to health and well-being and an emphasis on self-defence and practical application

YOGA

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. Yoga is taught in schools and community centres across India and is also recognized by the United Nations as a valuable tool for promoting health and well-being. 21st of June every year is celebrated as International Day of Yoga. Yoga is a unique practice that offers many benefits for physical, mental, and spiritual health. Some of the special qualities that make yoga a popular and effective practice include focus on breathing, a variety of styles and practices, emphasis on mindfulness and self-awareness, focus on strength and flexibility and integration of body, mind and spirit.

RANGOLI

Rangoli is an ancient Indian art form drawn at the entrance of homes to usher in peace and prosperity. These are intricate colourful patterns drawn in the courtyard or just outside the threshold of the entrance door to ward off evil spirits. Rangoli is believed to make the surroundings aesthetic and auspicious. It brings good luck and prosperity to the house and the family and welcomes guests. Rangoli designs often incorporate geometric shapes, floral patterns, and religious symbols, with each design having its unique style and symbolism. The vibrant colours, intricate designs, regional diversity, spiritual and cultural significance, and social significance make it a special and unique art form that is loved by people of all ages in India and around the world. PIOFest will attempt to enter the Malaysia Book of Records with the most number of participants in drawing a single Rangoli. Rangoli will add more appeal and colours to the festival.

"In Indian martial arts, the journey is more important than the destination. It is the process of self-discovery and growth that matters." - Grandmaster Gopal Prasad Dubey.



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PIO TRADITIONAL INDOOR & OUTDOOR GAMES

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Vivekananda Ashram & Vivekananda School Field, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

Indian Traditional Games develop logical thinking, building strategy, concentration, mathematical and aiming skills among the players. Many of the games of Indian origin like badminton, chess, carom, snakes and ladders have today gained global appeal. Playing traditional games, such as board or outdoor games helps children to develop thinking skills, learn cooperation and teamwork, and to work on strategies and tactics. Games are a fun way of getting children to learn without them even realising it! Many traditional Indian games require strategy and skill and can be quite challenging to master. This can help to develop cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills, as well as provide a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Indian traditional games have many unique characteristics that make them special and distinct from games played in other parts of the world. Many Indian traditional games have deep cultural and historical significance. They are often associated with specific regions, religions, or social groups, and have been passed down through generations as a way to preserve cultural traditions and values. Traditional Indian games often involve physical activity, which can help promote overall health and well-being. This is especially important in a modern world where sedentary lifestyles are becoming increasingly common leading to many health and social issues.

PIOfest will feature traditional indoor games like Chess, Dhaayakattam, Paramapadham, and Pallanguzhi. PIOs have a rich cultural heritage when it comes to traditional games. PIOfest will also feature traditional outdoor games like Pambaram (top), Uri-adithal (pot-beaking), Gilli, Pandi and Goli. Some friendly games like Kabbadi and Kho Kho will be held for demonstration and promotional purposes. These games have been played for centuries and continue to be popular today. Some examples of Indian traditional games include Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Pachisi, Gilli-danda and Chausar.

PIOfest is an avenue for people from all walks of life to watch and engage in these games and enjoy themselves. These Games will encourage the involvement of children and youths and are vital in creating a festive environment. Members of the public who are interested may register and join in during the Festival. This will enable children to participate and get involved with the Festival. The traditional indoor and outdoor games are open for participation and viewing on all the 3 days of PIOfest celebrations.

"Indian traditional games like kabaddi, kho-kho, and gilli-danda are a testament to the ingenuity and creativity of our ancestors." - Virat Kohli





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PIO BAZAAR

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Vivekananda School Grounds, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

The Bazaar is designed to reflect a traditional marketplace filled with food and handicrafts to make the experience even more interesting and culturally complete. Festivals are also a great venue for brand-building, engaging with real-time customer research, and real-time insight on prospective customers, they can also be a helpful product development resource and provide prime networking opportunities.

Indian food is known for its unique blend of flavours, spices, and aromas that create a rich and diverse culinary experience. Spices and regional diversity make Indian food very special. A large number of Indians are vegetarian, and as a result, vegetarian cuisine has become an integral part of Indian food culture. Many traditional Indian dishes are made without meat and are rich in vegetables, lentils, and grains. Indians are famous for their street food, which offers a variety of tasty and affordable options for locals and tourists alike. Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine and wellness, has had a significant influence on Indian cuisine. Many Indian dishes are designed to balance the body's doshas (energies) and promote health and well-being.

Speaking of curry and Masala, Indian cuisine consists of thousands of regional cuisines which date back thousands of years. The dishes of the PIOs are characterised by the extensive use of various spices, herbs, vegetables and fruits. Indian cuisine is a rich and diverse culinary experience that offers a unique blend of flavours, spices, and aromas. It is an important part of the PIO cultural heritage and is valued for its taste, health benefits and diversity. Refreshments and traditional delicacies will also be available at the PIOfest, spicing up the celebration.

Indian handicrafts are a diverse and rich collection of traditional crafts that have been created by skilled artisans for centuries. India has a long history of producing handicrafts that are unique, beautiful, and of high quality. Pottery, Statues, Textiles, Carpets, Jewellery, Wood carving and Metalwork are some of the famous handicrafts of India. They are an important part of the country's cultural heritage and are valued both for their beauty and for the skill and craftsmanship that goes into creating them.

Sales booths will display a wide selection of products and services presented in an exotic display of sights, sounds, tastes and aromas which represent the many different aspects of Indian Culture and Heritage. Patrons will also be exposed to a wide selection of books, handicrafts and traditional food with authentic Indian flavour. Education, Tourism, Ayurveda, Siddha, beauty care and body art, Vedic astrology, palmistry, numerology and others will be featured in the bazaar.

"Indian food is like a symphony, where each spice and ingredient plays a unique role in creating a harmonious dish." - Floyd Cardoz



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CONTESTS & COSTUME PARADE

2nd to 4th June 2023 | Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

COSTUME PARADE

The Costume Parade is to showcase the traditional attire of the various ethnic PIO communities. Young men and ladies will walk elegantly in attractive traditional attires. The parade is aimed to encourage people to adorn traditional costumes and accessories, including tilak and bindi.

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Even those with clear ideas about their photography can benefit from a clear direction to head in and capture great moments from different angles, and a photo contest is one great way to achieve this. The photography contest is open to public participation. Anyone can capture and submit photographs of the Festival during the three days. The photos with the most number of likes on social media and the ones selected by the panel of judges shall win prizes.

SHORT DOCUMENTARY

Short-form videos are a way for brands and creators to showcase content in a new way, share information or convey messages. They shall be used to capture the emotions of viewers and personalise the brand and increase people's engagement. The short documentary contest is open to public participation. Anyone can capture the events during the Festival, and narrate them with a message. The video with the most number of likes on social media, the one selected by the panel of judges shall win prizes.

MISS PIO

Groomed ladies are a reflection of the rich culture, health and wealth of their society. Well-groomed personalities are motivated people with the urge for the best performance and achievements in all their activities. Since the last century, women have generally evolved from being homemakers to competent leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals. Miss PIO is to promote beauty, health and wealth in women whilst encouraging the use of Sari and traditional attires. The beauty Pageant will incorporate the richness of the Indian tradition and spectacle of the beauty of well-groomed women. The event is organised and promoted to induct traditional richness and a pleasant feature in the wholesome building of community well-being.

"The percentage of Indian kids doing some sort of artistic work is much higher than in the general population - painting, drawing, dancing, singing. The creation of art is still an everyday part of Indian culture, unlike the dominant culture, where art is sort of peripheral". - Sherman Alexie



SIDDHA & AYURVEDA CONFERENCE

3rd June 2023 | Appadurai Hall, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

Siddha medicine is a traditional system of healing that originated in South India and is considered to be one of India's oldest systems of medicine. The Siddha system is based on a combination of ancient medicinal practices and spiritual disciplines as well as alchemy and mysticism. Practitioners of Siddha medicine are known as Siddhars (or siddhas). They contributed not only to a system of medicine but also to the knowledge of eternity, alchemy, and Yogic living. Siddha medicine aims to make the body perfect and differs vastly from the other conventional forms of medicine. Siddha concentrates on healing from within and as a result, a more solid foundation towards eliminating diseases.

Ayurvedic medicine is one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems. It was developed more than 3,000 years ago in India. It is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. Its main goal is to promote good health, not fight disease. Among the things that can upset this balance are genetic or birth defects, injuries, climate and seasonal change, age, and emotions. The cleansing process in Ayurveda called Panchakarma is designed to reduce the symptoms and restore harmony and balance. To achieve this, an Ayurvedic practitioner uses blood purification, massage, medicinal oils, herbs, and enemas or laxatives.

The Siddha and Ayurveda Conference will be held on the 4th of June 2023 at Appadurai Hall in Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur.

"Many of the advances in the sciences that we consider today to have been made in Europe were made in India centuries ago."- James Grant Duff



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3rd & 4th June 2023 | Vivekananda Ashram Hall, Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur

The conference is a step towards encouraging ethnic historical studies. This year, the theme shall be the migration of the PIOs. For students and researchers, this academic conference shall help to make their research and understanding of the subject easier. The conference can also provide access to various other research activities related to the subject with current findings and developments anticipated from them.

Topics for Paper Presentation.

- Indians and Ancient Malaysia before the PIOs.
- Factors Contributing to the Migration of PIOs.
- The mode and travel conditions of PIOs to Malaysia.
- Early PIO movement, settlements and living conditions in Malaysia.
- PIOs as Nation Builders – A Global Perspective.
- The contributions of PIOs in plantations, public works and administration.
- PIOs as money lenders (bankers) for businesses and enterprises.
- The role of PIOs in unions, politics and social reforms.
- PIOs in the fight for freedom and the independence of Malaysia.

Topics for Panel Discussion

- Bujang Valley as a Tourist Destination.
- PIOs as Partners in Nation building.

PIO Academic Conference will be held on 3rd June 2023 at the Vivekananda Ashram Hall in Brickfields Little India, Kuala Lumpur.

"I kept on trying to use so many media and ideas in my work because our horizon is so vast and Indian culture is so rich that I think what we are today, culturally, we have a unique position and I don't think one lifetime is enough to encompass it." - M.F.Husain





**GOPIO KUALA LUMPUR
MALAYSIA**