

INDIAN ARRIVAL DAY SPEECH

Fellow citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, it gives me great pleasure to extend greetings to the entire Nation on the 165th Anniversary of the Arrival of our East Indian forefathers to these shores. More than just a day of remembrance, it is a day when we must give thanks to God, and celebrate the human spirit's triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds, to build a legacy of strength, discipline and tolerance that has helped make us what we all are today as a nation.

Indeed my brothers and sisters, the journey of our East Indian forebears was long and arduous, and didn't come cheaply. It took patience, vision, belief and a spirit of sacrifice to begin a new life in a strange land, with the hope that one day, their offspring would reap the rewards of that sojourn.

And while the East Indian experience was unique in its own way, as would have been for those who made their life's journey to these shores from Africa, China, Europe and the farthest reaches of the globe, there were many things that were common to all... but most important among these was a desire to enjoy life's greatest freedoms without fear, and in an atmosphere of peace, prosperity and harmony.

And this more than anything else has been the legacy that has found its greatest expression in our people, from all walks of life - in our music, our food, our dance, the way we interact with each other... It's a journey that has taken us all centuries to arrive at, and still the journey continues as we steadily improve the means by which we travel to the destination of our Nationhood.

For this reason the Ministry of Arts and Culture will be redesigned to become the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism in order to give greater voice to the diverse cultural expressions of our common desires for individual and national identity. There will be a realignment of policies including resource allocation, to allow for a more equitable recognition and fulfilment of the needs of the diverse proponents of our culture.

Our celebration of days such as this must be more than just a formality, but an active reaffirmation of this Government's commitment to ensure that every creed and race finds an equal place in this land of ours.

To you all I wish a very happy, peaceful and enjoyable Indian Arrival Day.
May God bless us all.