



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**MESSAGE TO THE NATION BY
DR THE HONOURABLE KEITH ROWLEY, MP
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
ON THE OCCASION OF
INDIAN ARRIVAL DAY 2016**

On behalf of the people and Government, I extend warm regards to the East Indian community in Trinidad and Tobago, on the occasion of Indian Arrival Day 2016.

Notwithstanding our small, geographic size, Trinidad and Tobago may boast of many internationally acclaimed accomplishments. We have excelled and continue to register significant achievements in the areas of academia, diplomacy, music, fashion and sport.

Yet perhaps none of these successes is as great as the enduring capacity of our people, to create from our social diversity, a Nation where the different aspects of our cultural heritage are peacefully respected, honoured and commemorated.

Internationally, far too often we now witness the unfortunate consequences of religious or ethnic factions, within countries, trying to claim a space for themselves. In many of those nations, diversity divides rather than strengthens. Peaceful co-existence remains a distant dream rather than a tangible reality.

Therefore as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, we must be justifiably proud of ourselves for our enviable ability to live together, in unity, under God.

Today as a Nation, we commemorate the arrival of the first East Indian immigrants to the shores of Trinidad and Tobago, in 1845.

These early immigrants, who came as indentured labourers to work in the sugar estates of Trinidad, toiled under harsh conditions but found solace in the values, traditions and customs brought with them from their homeland.

Today our social reality has been infused with the traditions of the East Indian community, giving our country its rich, unique culture.

From the religious observances of Eid ul Fitr and Divali, the commemorative events of Phagwa, Ramleela and Hosay; the addition of delicacies such as roti, doubles, saheena, katchowrie, barah, anchar, pholourie and other East Indian dishes to the national cuisine; the infectious sounds of the tassa, tabla, dholak, majeera, bansoori, sitar and harmonium on our musical landscape, to their achievements in the fields of business, politics, culture and education; our East Indian brothers and sisters have made outstanding and invaluable contributions to the socio-economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Family and community interaction also played a key role in the daily lives of the first East Indian immigrants – values which still hold true today.

Our country is currently facing several challenges, some triggered by global events outside of our control. We continue to grapple with unacceptable levels of crime and criminal behaviour perpetrated by the few who believe we must live in fear.

But I, and I feel certain that I also speak for the majority of our population, am not prepared to give in to these criminal elements. I and the members of this Government give you the assurance that we will work tirelessly with you to ensure that the ship of State is not destabilized.

Now more than ever, we must continue to resist the temptation to use differences to create discord. Instead we need to focus our collective energy on working together as family – the national family - to ensure that we remain on the path to peace, progress and prosperity, which we have all come to enjoy.

At this time of celebration, let us all recommit to making Trinidad and Tobago a country which stands as a lasting example of unity and strength in diversity.

To the members of our East Indian community and to the national community, I wish you a happy and safe Indian Arrival Day.