

Happy Indian Arrival Day

TODAY, we celebrate the arrival of the first indentured labourers from India as a new labour force.

The passengers aboard the *Fatel Razack* brought to our shores, a rich culture that added to the unique blend of races and religions in our ethnically diverse population, helping to mould the identity of our nation before we were independent and before we knew what that identity would look like.

East Indians have contributed and influenced the development of our nation together with all other races and ethnicities that call Trinidad and Tobago home. Our nation is built on the backs of many ancestors, reinforcing our core and reminding us that as a nation, there is strength in unity.

We are very fortunate that as one people, we reflect the phenomenal beauty of diversity and a profound sense of inclusion living side by side, totally involved in the culture and life of each other as human beings living under the umbrella of Trinidad and Tobago.

Not only does it matter where we came from but, more so, that we have created and continue to create an envious paradise on this earth, not yet perfect but full of promise, an ever-evolving work in progress championed by our multiracial, multi-ethnic, multi-re-



ligious people seeking to achieve a nation that is wholesome, equitable and empowered by its diverse human capabilities.

As part of this work in progress, the Equal Opportunity Commission plays a crucial role in the development of our national identity as the state body mandated to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

The commission's mandate is to serve as a helm that steers our nation's ship safely to the ideal of equality of opportunity for all. However, the evolution of our society will determine just how choppy the waters will be in getting to that destination.

Through its public education efforts, the commission raises awareness on the issues that still exist in our country and provide tools and solution-based support. We provide guidance, but more importantly, we empower people to use education to promote respect for

different races and cultures.

This includes self-awareness, talking to their circles and teaching through positive actions.

The commission also provides a redress mechanism for those who have been discriminated against. They can lodge a complaint at the commission, which the commission will receive, investigate and conciliate. All of its services up until conciliation are free of charge.

As we celebrate Indian Arrival Day as one of the significant moments in our nationhood, there is a lot to be proud of and thankful for, in the contributions made by this culturally-rich segment of our people, for which we are better off.

And as we get ready to celebrate the maturity of 60 years of independence from a shared colonial past, we must imagine a bright future when we will be able to reflect upon our colonial history as the catalyst that made our nation great.

We must stand strong together as one people with our common humanity the glue that seals our faith and prosperity as a nation.

The Equal Opportunity Commission wishes Trinidad and Tobago a Happy Indian Arrival Day.