

## **Diwali's message of tolerance, compassion and the victory of good over evil resonates with employees of the Integrity Commission**

Diwali's message of tolerance, compassion and the victory of good over evil resonated through the office of the Integrity Commission as employees came together to celebrate the festival of lights at the Commission's office at Independence Square Port-of-Spain last week.

Integrity Commissioner Seunarine Jokhoo prayed and explained to employees the rituals during the worship of Mother Lakshmi which was performed by Prabhawatie Ramdial and Melissa Sooklal. Following the singing of Bhajans he added that *"all religion pray to the same God, through different forms of worship but with the same message. Religion is intended to Unite not Divide people. We have to treat all people equally, with respect and fairness."*

Melissa Sooklal reminded that Diwali signifies goodness and one of our most cherished freedoms: the freedom of religion. It celebrates Lord Rama's glorious and long awaited return to his kingdom of Ayodhya after defeating the evil demon king of Lanka, Ravana. Year after year this homecoming of Lord Rama is commemorated on Diwali with lights, fireworks, bursting of crackers and a festive meal of Indian delicacies. The festival gets its name Deepawali, or Diwali, from the rows of lamps that the people of Ayodhya lit to welcome their King.

Prabhawatie Ramdial gave a Diwali message on the theme "Peace and Non Violence". She indicated that all religious traditions of the world --Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism -- have placed great emphasis on the development of a peaceful society - one that is governed by acceptable codes of ethics and behavioral patterns, whereby mankind can co-exist peacefully with each other and the rest of creation, in a civilized manner. As such, organized society is predicated on the existence, acceptance and application of basic values. Transgression of these values leads to disturbance in the equilibrium of creation, leading quite often to violence. She reiterated the words of **Martin Luther King Jr.** *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."*

Employees all had opportunity to participate through a question and answer segment on different aspects of the Hindu tradition as well as a team word search puzzle. Registrar Martin Farrell reinforced the need for strong family values.

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