

Looking ahead, the 2026 festival promises to be a milestone: it will mark both the 20th anniversary of the sport in Trinidad and Tobago and the 220th anniversary of Chinese arrival. Dalip hopes it will be an opportunity for expanded celebrations, deeper cultural exchange, and renewed public interest.

YOUTH, TOURISM, AND THE FUTURE

For Dalip, the future of dragon boating lies in youth engagement. Schools have proven to be a fertile ground for new teams, with students embracing the sport with the same passion they bring to football or cricket. “When schools compete, it feels like Intercol,” he said, describing the lively atmosphere of drums, flags,

and cheering sections. Several schools have even competed abroad, including Bishop Anstey High School, which Dalip himself coached to international events in Los Angeles and Canada.

Tourism also offers untapped potential, particularly in Tobago. Dalip believes the island’s natural beauty and tourism infrastructure make it far more attractive than Trinidad for hosting international regattas. “We gave visiting teams limbo, steelpan, and coconut trees,” he laughed. “It was the perfect Caribbean experience.”

Still, he cautions that more must be done to position the festival as a viable sporting tourism product. “Dragon boat racing happens every weekend somewhere in the world,” he said. “To stand out, we need to create a distinct experience that blends sport with our unique culture.”

A FESTIVAL ROOTED IN HERITAGE

At its core, the Dragon Boat Festival is about more than racing. It is a celebration of Chinese heritage in Trinidad and Tobago, a living tribute to the contributions of a community that has shaped the nation’s history. For Dalip, this is its most enduring value. “This is their show,” he said. “It’s like Divali for Hindus or Eid for Muslims. It’s a time when the Chinese community shines, and the rest of the country celebrates with them.”

As the 2025 festival approaches, Dalip remains steadfast in his vision. He hopes the sport will continue to grow, drawing young people in, fostering cultural pride, and showcasing the unity of a nation.

“Dragon boat racing offers so much,” he reflected. “It’s sport, it’s culture, it’s community. And once you’ve been in a boat, you understand—it’s an experience like no other.”

