

## Epic Carnival injects

# US\$5m

### into T&T economy

By Sherlan Ramsubhag

sherlan.ramsubhag@trinidadexpress.com

THE Epic Carnival Experience cruise injected approximately US\$5 million into the Trinidad and Tobago economy during Carnival 2025.

This according to chief executive officer Jonathan Mack as he spoke during a media conference at Queen's Hall in St Ann's Monday.

He said the Epic Carnival Experience cruise remained in Trinidad and Tobago waters from February 26 to March 7 during the Carnival season.

Giving a breakdown of the various streams of revenue brought to the shores of Trinidad and Tobago over the nine-day period Mack said approximately US\$500,000 was spent on local labour; US\$1.2 million in fetes; US\$1.4 million on Carnival costumes; US\$900,000 on transport and craft items; and US\$192,000 on local services.

He explained that these figures were for 1,200 passengers who boarded in Puerto Rico and did not account for the 300 locals who boarded at the Cruise Ship Complex in Port of Spain.

'Not only are we bringing culture and exporting Trinidad and Tobago, we are actually bringing real, actual revenue to our country. And we know that there are exchange rate problems getting US dollars, people spent US dollars in Trinidad and Tobago so Epic is providing value for our country,' Mack stated.

He said while the cruise was in its second year of operation with its first year in 2023, this year it also operated as a 'floating hotel'. He said 1,200 passengers flew to the ship's boarding point in Puerto Rico, while some of the 300 who boarded in Trinidad opted to fly to the country and then board.

A ticket for the nine-day cruise cost between US\$6,000 to US\$12,000 and covered buffet meals and an open bar.

'It's Trinidad's technically first premium all-inclusive hotel. It has saunas, (hot tubs), two pools, day care for the kids; for parents who want to bring kids. So all of that is included in the package and also access to fetes,' Mack explained. 'The ability to board in Trinidad and Tobago as a floating hotel and not have to come from Puerto Rico was a huge difference this year and I think it is going to provide value for the consumer flying in to experience Trinidad Carnival and can't find a hotel room.'

People who came aboard in Trinidad paid between US\$4,000 to US\$8,000 for the nine-day period.

He said: 'We are going to start building assets like this that not only target the diaspora but we are going to create advertisements for Trinidad and Tobago that are Sandals hotel-like where we are exporting to people that never even thought of Trinidad and Tobago as an option. We truly want to export our culture, our art and our people to the world.'

He argued that carnivals in other parts of the Caribbean and the world were cheaper and were also widely advertised worldwide in comparison to Trinidad and Tobago which was a disadvantage to the islands.

He said: 'It's time for Trinidad and Tobago to really realise that if we want to continue and we want to be competitive in this world we need to reinvest in our culture.'

Mack said: 'Epic has been the only thing that I've seen thus far as truly exporting Trinidad Carnival to the world.'

He called on the Government, Ministry of Tourism, and the private sector to pool together with his company to export Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and culture.