

Kirani's gold medal victory is priceless, says Tourism Minister

St. George's, September 1, 2011 – Grenada's Tourism Minister has described the 400-meter World Championship victory of Kirani James as a personal and national triumph, as well as a "golden opportunity" to further propel Grenada's burgeoning sports-tourism policy.

"There is no price that we can put on Kirani's victory," Hon. Peter David said.

"I want to offer my own congratulations to Kirani and to also commend Rondell Bartholomew on a gritty performance in which he placed sixth in the 400, despite a nagging injury," the Minister added. "We must also give respect to Janelle Redhead who made it to the semifinal of the 200 meters."

Minister David said he watched on television the "thrilling race" that James won in a personal-best time of 44.60 seconds.

The teenaged Grenadian from Gouyave, St. John, is the youngest male athlete in history to win the 400-meter race at the IAAF World Championship level.

"I was just trying to stay as relaxed as possible and just follow my individual race plan and finish strong," James said of tracking down American LaShawn Merritt, who led by two steps coming off the final curve at the stadium in Daegu, South Korea.

Mr. David said that under a review of the local tourism product, the Ministry of Tourism and the Board of Tourism have been considering strengthening the link between tourism and sports and engaging Grenada's high-profile international athletes to market the country.

"This engagement with stars such as Kirani James will be stepped up and intensified," Tourism Minister David said. "The triumphant run by Kirani is a proud moment for him, his family, his coaches and Grenada. It's also a golden opportunity for sports and tourism in our nation."

The Tourism Minister pledged his "complete support" for a package of incentives that Prime Minister Tillman Thomas has promised for James and the other international track athletes.

James was presented with his World Championship gold medal on September 1, which was also his 19th birthday.

As the Grenada flag was being raised and the National Anthem being played, James was seen quietly singing the words to the anthem.

James, in a comment on his Facebook page, wrote: “Just want to take this moment to say thanks to everyone for your support this year and all the years before that; no matter how small or large the magnitude, I really, really appreciate it.”

-30-



Kirani James beats LaShawn Merritt to win the gold



Prime Minister Tillman Thomas visits Gouyave to meet residents including James' mother, Pamela (seen just behind the PM), and the athlete's older brother, Gary (smiling to the left of the PM)