

**MESSAGE TO THE NATION BY DR THE HONOURABLE KEITH ROWLEY, MP PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO ON THE OCCASION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S 55<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE**

**31 August 2017**

Fellow Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago

On the occasion of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence, many of us would be mindful of our journey as a nation. As a Small Island Developing State, our ability to navigate the journey of nationhood has always depended on our creativity, our willingness to work hard and our ability to stand firm together as a nation.

In order to continue on the path of growth and development, we the people are mandated to foster a strong patriotism as well as our own capacity to take full advantage of opportunities through clear focus, grit and determination.

Despite our challenges, I believe that Trinidad and Tobago continues to live up to the promise and potential we demonstrated in 1962 and we can ill-afford to falter now. We must strengthen our democratic institutions and implement policies that are tailored to our specific conditions and developmental objectives. In so doing, we will increase our chances of success exponentially.

Earlier this month, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago received an incredible pre – Independence Day gift. We witnessed our fantastic four – Jarrin Solomon, Jareem Richards, Machel Cedenio and Lalonde Gordon – bring home our country's first ever gold medal in the 4×400 metres relay event at the recently concluded IAAF World Championships in London, England.

A few days earlier, Jareem Richards had made his mark in the 200m event claiming a bronze medal for the country.

These followed the achievements of Akeem Stewart who broke his own world record on his way to gold in the men's javelin F44 event at the London 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in July.

Fellow citizens, perhaps there is no better message that I can share with you on this Independence Day, than the words of our athletes. I noted the remarks of the young men as they spoke to the media after their races. When asked about their achievements, the

young men described themselves as being “focused and fearless”. They declared that they had “made up their minds” and that, “our country can achieve if we work together”.

On this Independence Day 2017, let us move forward with the focus, grit and determination demonstrated by our athletes. Let us support one another as we seek to implement the most progressive strategies and policies to attain economic, social and cultural growth and development. Like our athletes, let us make up our minds to be focused and fearless on being the best we can be individually and collectively. I believe that we are a winning team of capable, enlightened citizens. Let us come together as a winning team.

Our nation’s motto says it best: together we aspire, together we achieve. I implore you to re-commit to these words daily as we build a better nation.

On behalf of the Government, I wish each and every citizen of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago a safe and happy Independence. May God continue to bless our nation.