



LONDON — There was an outburst of national pride as scores of Jamaicans, fans of the country, the media and officials turned out for the opening of Jamaica House at the O2 arena in London, on Friday, August 3.

Heading the list of attendees were High Commissioner to the United Kingdom (UK), Her Excellency Aloun Ndombet Assamba; Minister of Tourism and Entertainment, Hon. Dr. Wykeham McNeill; Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Hon. Anthony Hylton; Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita Headley; President of the Jamaica Olympic Association (JOA), Mike Fennell and the UK Foreign Minister for the Caribbean, Henry Billingham.

Jamaica House will be opened to the public for 10 days, and in addition to being part of the UK celebrations of the island's 50th anniversary of Independence, it will also showcase all things Jamaican and be a major venue for supporters of Jamaican athletes during the Olympics.



In his address, Mr. Fennell said his organisation was pleased to be associated with Jamaica House, and the presence of the Ministers was an acknowledgement of the important role that sports is playing for Jamaica.

He noted that this was the first time that Jamaica has ever set up a county house at any Olympics, and the initiative was welcomed by the JOA.

"The initiative to put this together by JAMPRO, the Jamaica Tourist Board (and the Jamaica 50 Secretariat) is something that we welcome and applaud, particularly as it is in London where there is such a large Jamaican community that has support us so well," he said.

Mr. Fennell said the Jamaican athletes would do the country proud. "My friends, you are supporting a winning team, you are supporting our athletes who are going to do us proud yet again. So, let us keep on giving them your support, so that they can continue to feel how appreciated they are for what they are, and for what they are doing for their country and themselves," he said.

For her part, Mrs. Neita Headley said that it was important to ensure that the country benefitted economically from the success of the athletes, and urged UK Jamaicans to help in this process.

"Our sports men and women have done us justice and as a country, we are to seek to capitalise on the natural talent of our people to ensure that whatever is made from this industry can also seek to facilitate our own economic standing in the world. We are a proud people, we are a bright people, we are people with ability, and this must therefore be shown at the bottom line of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," she argued.

"Help us to make Jamaica proud, help us to make Jamaica strong economically, help us to turn sports and tourism into Jamaican dollars, US dollars and foreign currency that will help to build our economy," the Minister said.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Minister said while the 50th anniversary was a time of reflection, it was also a time for celebration.

"This year we are celebrating our 50th anniversary; it's a year when we reflect on those things that we have done well, it's a year that we reflect on the things that we could have done better, but in the midst of that reflection, you must have celebration," he said.

Jamaica House will showcase the best of Jamaican heritage, food and culture and also be a venue for a series of seminars, meetings and discussions, aimed at increasing trade and investment opportunities as well as tourist arrivals to the island. A special feature of Jamaica House will be the Jamaican shop that will be opened to the public until August 12.