

The economy and tourism are set to benefit from the staging of the 2013 CARIFTA Swimming and Water Polo Championships, to be held in the island from March 30 to April 3.

The event will see some 800 athletes from approximately 16 countries across the region participating in swimming, water polo, and for the first time in Jamaica, open water swimming.

The open water swimming aspect of the Championships will take place in Discovery Bay, St. Ann on the final day. The remaining events will be held at the National Stadium Pool in Kingston.

Speaking at the press launch, held at the National Stadium Aquatic Complex in Kingston on Thursday (January 30), Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita- Headley said the spinoff from the championships will be economically beneficial to the country, as a successful staging could help to boost Jamaica's tourism product.

Mrs. Neita-Headley noted that the event, which is in its 28th staging, will see some 800 athletes in addition to "their parents, coaches, supporters, swimming clubs, and the media that will follow them" converging in Jamaica for four days of competition.

"We have 2,500 hotel rooms in Kingston, so you can imagine what the value added is going to be," she said.

The Minister said she is also excited about Jamaica hosting its first open water swimming competition, which promises to be a great event that could help to increase the country's tourism prospects.

"I look forward to the open water swimming aspect of these championships. A successful staging of that in Discovery Bay, I believe, will open doors and opportunities for enhancing this great tourism product that we already have," she added.

In the meantime, the Amateur Swimming Association of Jamaica (ASAJ) is reporting that the National Stadium Pool complex is being refurbished for the hosting of the event.

President of the ASAJ, Martin Lyn, informed that in addition to the swimming pool facilities being refurbished, the Association has also installed a new score board and is in the process of adding brand new touch pads to the pools.

“All systems are now go. We’re now filling the pool, which will take three days to be filled, as it’s over a million gallons of water. And after that, we take about one day for the stabilisation of the chemicals and then the pool will be pristine and ready for any meet of any standard,” he said.

The CARIFTA championships will be staged at an estimated cost of \$15 million. Mr. Lyn pointed out that in addition to seeking sponsorship, the ASAJ will be hosting a number of fund-raising activities in an effort to secure funds for the event.