

In addition to spending \$1.2 billion on sports annually, the Government is committing to develop more structured policies and initiatives that will see increased support for the various sporting disciplines, as well as improvements to facilities.

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller and Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita Headley, met with national sporting associations and federations in downtown Kingston on Thursday (February 28), to discuss these matters, and point the way forward for brand Jamaica to build on its achievements in the sporting arena.

Minister Neita Headley noted that expanding the reach of brand Jamaica through sports will benefit all. She told the bodies that if Jamaica is to be really competitive across wider sporting disciplines, then there should be at least one proper sports facility, of world class, in each parish.

She also pointed out that any facility to be built or upgraded must be accessible to all, including the elderly and the disabled, to ensure that the 'sports for all' concept in the policy is realised.

She disclosed that the government is examining how current facilities such as the National Stadium are being upgraded. Among the areas being looked at is how to make them more media friendly by increasing the availability of technology.

Mrs. Neita Headley said the growth and development of sports require innovation and creativity, and it also affords an excellent opportunity to promote healthy lifestyles.

The centrepiece of the discussions was the strategic priorities for sports in 2013/14; and the draft white paper on the National Sports Policy, which is to be tabled in Parliament this month.

The forum also looked at guidelines for hosting international sporting events; the development of sports which are less popular than track and field; the education of athletes; tax incentives for

importing sporting equipment; and opportunities for sports tourism, among other topics.