

Jamaica 50 celebration launched in the UK

The United Kingdom leg of the global celebrations to mark Jamaica's 50th year of Independence in 2012 was launched on Tuesday in London.

The programme of activities in the UK will begin in January and continue throughout the year in major cities and towns including London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Reading.

The celebration activities involve concerts, fashion show, sports events, conferences, lectures, dinners, balls and a cultural summer camp for youth.

Addressing the launch ceremony via video link from Kingston, the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Olivia Grange, invited the whole of the United Kingdom to join the celebrations which she said would "highlight Jamaica's nation building experience and the many successes of its people."

Minister Grange said:

"Our story is legendary. As a people we have succeeded in spite of many tribulations, putting Jamaica centre stage as one of the most important brands in the world.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we continue to astonish the world. We are the first country to have more than ten men running under 10 seconds in the 100 metres. We have the record for every international competition in the men's 100 metres. We have some of the fastest women in the world; and we have a Winter Olympics sports programme even without having snow."

The high point of the celebrations in August (on and close to the date of Jamaica's independence) will coincide with the time of the Olympic Games in London.

"We look towards the London Olympics when our Jamaican athletes will demonstrate our golden moment; and we look forward to raising the Black, Green and Gold in the Olympic Stadium in London and across the world."

Major events in celebration of Jamaica's 50th Anniversary of Independence will also be staged in Canada, South Africa and the United States.

The Jamaica 50 celebration will begin on New Year's Day with fireworks at several locations across the island.