

UK lifts tax to pull out Bolt

The British government on Thursday announced it would relax stiff income tax rules for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, a move that could lure Jamaican sprint sensation Usain Bolt and a host of top-tier athletes to the Glasgow showpiece.

Under British law, non-residents are required to pay a 50 per cent tax rate on their appearance fee, and also cough up a quantity of their worldwide endorsement income.

The regulation has forced Bolt, the reigning Olympic 100 and 200 metres champion, to opt out of the London Aviva Grand Prix for the last two years.

"With six months tomorrow to go until London 2012, I'm pleased to announce this special exemption for Glasgow 2014 which will prolong the Olympic legacy and help spread the long-term benefits into Scotland," said chief secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander.

"Everyone wants to see the best athletes compete at Glasgow 2014 and this exemption will make that more likely. Seeing the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, it's clear that Glasgow will be an outstanding venue for the Commonwealth Games which showcases the best of UK and international sporting talent." Glasgow 2014 chairman Lord Smith hailed the UK government's new initiative, pointing out it would now make the Games appealing to the world's best athletes, including the galaxy of Jamaican sprinters currently on the international stage.

Of recent, the Commonwealth Games have failed to attract elite athletes as they have opted for the brighter lights of the World Championship and the Olympics.

"This agreement opens the door for the Commonwealth's elite international athletes such as Jamaica's sprinters, Australia's swimmers and cyclists, and Kenya's distance runners to compete at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games," Lord Smith said.

"As a major multi-sport event, with a truly global reach, Glasgow 2014 and its Games Partners are working very hard to make the XX Commonwealth Games a 'must-attend' event for the brightest stars of the Commonwealth.

"There is no doubt that (this) announcement significantly increases the access and attraction for top performers to compete at Glasgow 2014."

The last edition of the Commonwealth Games was staged in Delhi, India, in 2010.