The wind is back in the windsurfers’ sails after the sport was reinstated as an Olympic event, and it is evident in this year’s SIM Singapore Open Asian Windsurfing Championships.

Apart from more competitors at the four-day regatta starting today at the National Service Resort and Country Club Sea Sports Centre off the East Coast, at least half of the more than 100 sailors hail from overseas, including from regional powerhouses Hong Kong and Thailand.

The number of foreign participants is a two-fold increase from last year’s turnout.

Said Timothy Khoo, president of the Windsurfing Association of Singapore: “The mood of the event is great and there is a great sense of relief among the windsurfers. Every one is happy that the sport is safe for at least the next Olympic cycle.

“We would probably have seen a huge drop in numbers this time if windsurfing wasn’t an Olympic event. It’s simple – once the funding is cut, athletes don’t get to compete.”

Windsurfing was initially dropped by the International Sailing Federation in favour of kitesurfing in May last year, but was reinstated six months later.

It also helps that the Singapore regatta is acting as the Asian Championships event for the RS:One class, which will likely be competed at this year’s SEA Games in Myanmar.

The RS:One was introduced in 2011 as a feeder class to bridge the gap from youth boardsailing to the adult Olympic RS:X class.

At Singapore’s Youth Olympics gold medallist Audrey Yong has her eyes on next year’s Asian Games and has chosen to focus on the RS:X.

The 18-year-old took a break from regular training for most of last year to focus on her studies as a first-year hotel and leisure facilities management student at the Singapore Polytechnic.

She said: “It’s been quite tough working to get my fitness back again. I’m just going to focus on having fun going out to race again.”

By MAY CHEN