

## **Access to Information**

Access to Information or Freedom of Information legislation, as it is called in some jurisdictions, has existed since 1776 and is in force in many countries. (eg the United States, Australia, Canada and most of Europe.)

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of countries adopting this type of legislation, the chief reasons being:

- the rise of new democracies with constitutional guarantees of the right to information;
- an increased involvement of International Bodies/Funding Agencies in the promotion of this type of law in furtherance of government accountability and transparency;

In the Caribbean, Jamaica was the third CARICOM country to enact such legislation after Trinidad and Belize.

The Access to Information Act was passed in June, 2002. It gives citizens and other persons a general legal right of access to official government documents which would otherwise be inaccessible. By recognising and upholding this right, the Act aims to reinforce fundamental democratic principles vital to:

- improved , more transparent government;
- greater accountability of government to its people;
- increased public influence on and participation in national decision making; and informed knowledge of the functioning of government.