

The Media Association of Jamaica (MAJ) is pleased that the Press Association of Jamaica (PAJ) has been invited to meet with the Minister with Responsibility for Information at the Office of the Prime Minister on Thursday April 25 to discuss media relations and access. The MAJ is confident that a mutually agreeable solution will be found which will preserve ready access to the Prime Minister and all public officials by our journalists.

On the eve of this scheduled meeting, the MAJ would like to emphasize its position that a free and unfettered press is essential for good governance and transparency from those who have been entrusted to conduct national business on our country's behalf. Any action taken which intentionally, or unintentionally, restricts conventional access of journalists who seek comments from those holding public office, on issues of national importance, is not to be taken lightly.

Access to our public officials is even more critical for Jamaica and Jamaicans in the current context of the country's economic situation, where our citizens are looking for a comprehensive plan of action from those chosen to lead, and where there is concern about possible corrupt activities on the part of public officials. We wish to remind all that a more informed and discerning public expects journalists to be more vigilant in seeking answers on their behalf from public officials. There are many more questions than answers in the public domain at this time. These need to be swiftly addressed lest the media be further criticised for not being vigilant enough in protecting the public interest.

The MAJ wholeheartedly supports the PAJ's view however that media workers must always endeavour to accord due respect for the offices of public officials. We are also prepared to dialogue on ways to ensure that this is preserved. The MAJ is willing and ready to assist in any way required to move this process forward.