

REORGANISATION OF THE REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT

The Chief Justice stated that much has been done in the past few years in regard to the ongoing restructuring of the Registration Department; this, was reiterated by Mrs. Maureen Crane–Scott, Registrar of the Supreme Court who spoke to “Challenge” in relation to the ongoing reorganisation of the Department. Mrs. Crane–Scott said that various aspects of the work done at the Department have been computerized including the work of the Probate Section and Records Branch. She emphasized that, in August 2004, a Customer Service Charter was launched with the assistance of the Office of Public Sector Reform, which highlighted the range of services provided by the Department with a maximum processing time being stipulated for each service being introduced.

She emphasized that the System of Assizes was re-evaluated in 2006 with the implementation of a system of continuous High Court Criminal Trials. Whereas, under the old regimen there were four Assizes, viz, January, April, July and October, the new system consist of one Assize, which opens in September – October and runs continuously with no breaks until July of the following year. This change alone has increased the number of trial days from 157 to 207. Mrs. Crane-Scott and her Assistant Registrar Mrs. Avril Sealy indicated that a fairly new feature of assigning different judges to oversee the Assizes has also resulted in a significant increase in the number of hearing days for criminal matters.

Mrs. Crane-Scott confirmed that the usual hours of business are between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and there are now longer sitting hours for judges. The completion of the new Judicial Centre on Whitepark Road will permit the Department to reorganize and rationalize its operation even further bringing the operation within a centralized location. As a result the efficiency of the department will improve, therefore allowing more cases to be heard. Expediting the general dispensation of justice while reducing cost to the administration.

The Registrar is looking forward to the Department acquiring the software programme, known by the acronym “JEMS” i.e. Judicial Enforcement Management System. The system is already in use in the OECS Supreme Court, the Caribbean Court of Justice and the Supreme Court of Jamaica. In her estimation, “JEMS” will enhance the Courts’ management of files and documents and reduce the incidence of lost files and other documents. Court cases will be scanned directly into a database for future retrieval by personnel who require the use of them.

The Registrar is confident that reorganization will enable the Department to focus on the different functions of the judicial system under her purview, and will enhance the services and the dispensation of justice to the citizenry, at large.