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JET ASKS COURT TO REVIEW GOJ'S DENIAL OF INFORMATION RE GOAT ISLANDS PROJECT

The Minister of Finance and Planning issued a Certificate of Exemption that prevented The Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) from getting information regarding the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) and China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) for plans to develop a port on the Goat Islands in the Portland Bight Protected Area. JET has applied to the Supreme Court to start the process of judicial review of the Certificate of Exemption.

In October 2013, JET requested these documents from the Port Authority of Jamaica. Access was denied in November 2013. JET then filed an appeal to the Appeals Tribunal of the Access to Information Act and was awaiting a hearing date when the organization received notice that the Minister of Finance and Planning had granted the Certificate of Exemption.

"We believe the Minister erred in granting the Certificate of Exemption," said Danielle Andrade, JET's Legal Director, "and we are concerned that this act strikes at the letter and spirit of the Access to Information Act."

JET has long objected to the lack of information reaching the public on the details of this important project. At a community meeting held on March 24th, 2014 in Old Harbour Bay, residents also expressed concern about the lack of public consultation.

JET will be represented by Hugh Small, QC, instructed by Danielle Andrade and Lisa Russell. "We are hoping for an early date for a hearing," said JET's Legal Director.

"Today is Earth Day," said JET's Chief Executive Officer, Diana McCaulay. "We regard openness and transparency as a critical foundation of good environmental stewardship. Natural resources, especially those in protected areas, belong to the people of Jamaica and projects which are very likely to harm those resources should be subject to thorough and early public consultation and disclosure of important documents," said the JET CEO.

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