

## **Official Secrets Act said to fuel sleaze**

*Wednesday May 31, 2006*

*The Standard*

*Standard Correspondent*

Government employees yesterday said the Official Secrets Act was a major contributor to corruption. They said the Act was also a stumbling block in the dissemination of information to the public. The senior Government officials attending the National Anti-Corruption Plan stakeholders meeting at Bomas of Kenya recommended a review of the Act. They said this would help them disseminate information to the public effectively. Other participants lauded the call. "The Official Secrets Act is the most notorious but it is not the only one," said one participant. The officials said there was also need for the Government to release accurate information regularly through press releases, conferences and press briefings. All ministries should also establish public information desks, it was proposed. The officials called for the review of salaries of public servants every two years, to eradicate their temptation to solicit for bribes due to poor remuneration. National Agency for the Control Against Drugs Abuse former co-ordinator Joseph Kaguthi said civil servants' pension should also be reviewed. He said the last time this was done was in 1993. "Pension should be pegged to 80 per cent of an employee's last salary," said Kaguthi. The officials said absence of schemes of service and non-adherence to the schemes where they existed promoted corruption within government offices. The schemes should be harmonised and those existing strictly enforced, they proposed. A suggestion by one participant to implement the anti-corruption plan in one year was rejected. Heritage minister Suleiman Shakombo said the period was too short. "It would not be practical due to Government bureaucracies," he said. The members agreed that a period of two years was more realistic.

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