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NEWSLINE

The e-Newsletter of the Sri Lanka Press Institute



What's Inside

The first-ever newsletter for the new year introduces the newest addition to SLPI's products "Journo.lk", its upcoming site dedicated for journalist work on a range of themes. The site will be up in the upcoming month for articles originally published on www.slpi.lk. This edition of NEWSLINE brings stories from RTI and Peace and Reconciliation and digital content on democracy and equality.

Peacebuilding and Lessons Learnt

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) was defeated by Sri Lanka's state military 18th May 2009 after a three-decade war. At the close of the war Sri Lanka is accused of violating human rights with 6 charges raised against the government, proving 5 of which would make Sri Lanka offensive under the international human rights law. Former General secretary of United Nations, Ban Ki-moon held talks with the then President Mahinda Rajapaksa and came to agreement that mechanisms for accountability regarding the alleged incidents at the end of the war would be implemented.

The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) thus established under article 2 of the Commissions Act comprised 8 commissioners. They made recommendations on areas of what lessons were learnt from the war and what must be done to create ethnic harmony. The LLRC conducted public consultations from 2010 to November 2011 and made 285 recommendations that were both criticized and accepted as constructive.

However, even after completing ten years since LLRC, the government has not been able to implement the

said recommendations. A few recommendations forwarded by the LLRC are investigating abductions and disappearances, examining the surrendered and arrested suspects for legal actions, guaranteeing freedom of expression and the right to information, providing facilities and security to the women, children, displaced persons and persons with disabilities, promoting peace and reconciliation among the ethnic communities through long term programmes, implementing tri-language policy from the school level, assuring peace education, use of art and culture for national unity and establishing the rule of law.

LLRC report highlights that the presidential commission has taken a long time in enabling an action plan. The recommendations of the LLRC outline the root causes of the thirty-year war and the occasional ethnic tensions that hinder peace and reconciliation. To ensure lasting peace it is essential that a proper foundation is built around solutions for these issues.

Extract from "The commission that learnt lessons" written by Sampath Deshapriya originally published on www.slpi.lk



Photograph by: Imesha Athukorale

Language Rights in Access to Rights

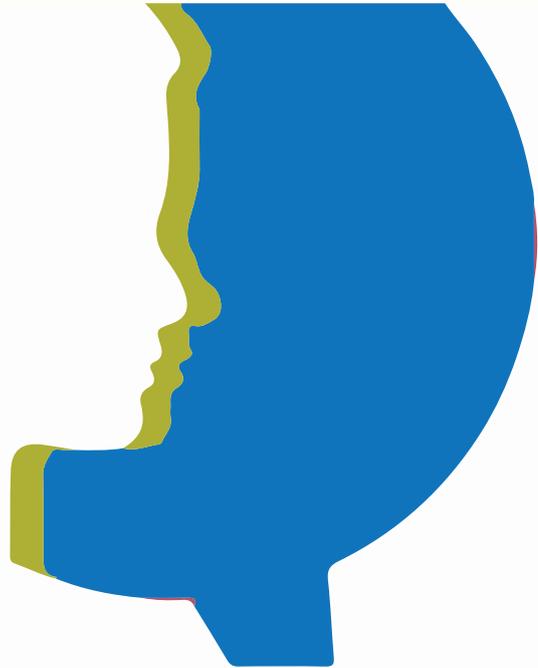


Image source: 2ser.com

The official website for RTI in Sri Lanka provides RTI forms in three languages, the two vernacular languages Sinhala and Tamil along with English, the link language. Upon downloading and viewing an 'Information Application' form (RTI-01 form) from the website, one will find that part 07 in the form is "Language in which requestor prefers access". This allows the applicant to specify which of the three languages (predominantly used in Sri Lanka) they wish to receive the reply to their information request.

However, despite making this specification the information requestor cannot always be assured of information from the public authority in their desired language. This has been the case in many occasions when requestors specifying desired language for information are provided responses in languages other than the specified.

In order to find out more about the public authorities' (PAs') hiring practices with regard to their RTI services, a Right to Information application was filed with the Right to Information Commission of Sri Lanka.

The application inquired whether all public authorities in Sri Lanka make sure to employ information officers who are capable of answering RTI application in Sinhala, Tamil and English. The RTI Commission answered that it is the responsibility of the public authority to appoint a suitable senior officer as the information officer.

What actions are taken if a public authority does not have an information officer who can provide information in the language requested in the RTI application was also raised. The Commission responded that PAs employ language translators for necessary translations. A point worth noting is that the reply also included the statement that Public Authorities have to respond to any correspondence in the language it has been submitted (Sinhala, Tamil or English).

For more articles on RTI access SLPI's official RTI site www.rtisrilanka.lk

Digital illustration series communicating democracy, fundamental rights, equality and tackling hate speech published on SLPI's social media platforms



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SLPI

Sri Lanka Press Institute is a not for profit organization advocating media freedom and professionalizing journalism in order to nurture an informed and discerning public committed to democratic ideals.

Journo.lk

The human interest accounts published on Journo range from themes on fundamental rights, transparency and accountability, hate speech, fake news, gender, and peace and reconciliation. The latest SLPI portal for quality journalism provides a unique platform of expression for journalists and communicators across the country.

RTI

In striving to maintain and promote good governance and freedom of expression SLPI's advocacy in spreading awareness and training on the Right to Information Act has been dominant. SLPI continues to broaden their programmes in this area for its greater dissemination.



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