



## Four years to right to information!

February 4, 2021 marked the fourth anniversary of the enactment of the Information Act of Sri Lanka. Although the Act is still in its infancy, the decade long fight by the citizens of the country to achieve the right to information should justly be celebrated as a great victory.

The right to information can be pointed out as one of the most active and practical tools of democracy and it is even currently the most active tool that has received a great deal of attention in the state machinery. It enables citizen access to information from the grassroot level and allows a transparent operational mechanism for the state.

Therefore, the exercise of the right to information enables the public to establish a transparent democracy.

Both Sinhala and Tamil versions of the newsletter  
can be accessed at [www.rtisrilanka.lk](http://www.rtisrilanka.lk)

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## RTI Journalists' Forum

The involvement of the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) in exercising and promoting the Right To Information is extensive. One such engagement is the formation of the Right to Information Journalists' Forum where SLPI intervened in hosting a monthly gathering of active journalists who are keen on exploring innovative practices of journalism that complements the media profession. Thereby, SLPI has brought the Act and the media fraternity together, in seeking to nurture an informed public committed to democratic ideals.

The forum focuses on the current situation related to the Information Act, the response of public authorities to requests for information, how to effectively use the information obtained, and new developments regarding the right to information internationally.

Even during the pandemic the SLPI continued to engage with the journalists via digital platforms. At the moment the forum has more than thirty active journalists who have joined in to share their experiences on the right to information and their media practice.



**“RTI has really strengthened our hands as journalists”**

**Namini Wijedasa**

Deputy Editor Investigations  
The Sunday Times.



**“Establishing a law to ensure access to information is a victory for the general public of Sri Lanka”**

**Lasantha Ruhunage**

Deputy Editor  
Anidda Newspaper



**“The RTI Act is beneficial to the people of the country, especially for the journalists”**

**K. Prasannakumar**

Journalist  
Thinakkural Newspaper





## RTI Awareness Programmes

Sri Lanka Press Institute has conducted workshops on the Right to Information at the district and provincial level to journalists and the youth. Awareness programs have also been conducted for the government service providers at the provincial level. Thereby, SLPI has trained more than 300 youths from Badulla, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Kandy, Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Colombo and Galle districts, about 660 journalists from across the island and has conducted over 520 awareness campaigns on the Information Act. The RTI Helpline maintained by the team also provides regular assistance to the public and media fraternity on queries regarding the Act.

## RTI changemaker.lk

On the digital front, SLPI has launched [www.changemaker.lk](http://www.changemaker.lk) to assist RTI users to track and archive the work produced. For example, when a journalist requests information through the website they are prompted with due action required in the application and appeal process as is necessary through the system. The website is available in all three languages and enables users an economical and effective mechanism of using and tracking RTI applications.

## RTI Help Desk

This Right To Information Help Desk can be pointed out as another active part of the program carried out by the Sri Lanka Press Institute to foster a culture of enthusiasm in the Right to Information Act among journalists and to promote exercising the access to information Act.

The Sri Lanka Press Institute has launched the RTI Help Desk to assist journalists and ease the process of practicing RTI. On behalf of the journalists the SLPI corresponds with the relevant information officers at Public Authorities and coordinates with the journalists for the transfer of information.

So far, 10 newsrooms have engaged with SLPI's RTI Help Desk and assisted to investigate more than 60 cases. In addition, the Sri Lanka Press Institute continues to liaise with newsrooms, make journalists and editors aware about the use of RTI Act and about the RTI Help Desk, and provide them with the guidance they need.

More than **300** youths have been trained

More than **520** awareness campaigns have been conducted

More than **660** journalists have been made aware about RTI Act

More than **30** journalists are sharing experiences in RTI Forum

More than **10** newsrooms have engaged with Help Desk and assisted to investigate more than **60** stories





# Success Stories

[www.rtisrilanka.lk](http://www.rtisrilanka.lk)

The Information Commission orders the Parliament to reveal the names of MPs who claimed assets

RTI  
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Sri Lanka Press Institute

The Right to Information Commission has placed an order with the Parliament of Sri Lanka to release the name list of Members of Parliament who have submitted their declarations of assets and liabilities.

After considering an appeal against the rejection of a request for information made to the Parliament under the Right to Information Act, the RTIC has issued this order on the 3rd of this month (03-02-2021). It is also noteworthy that it took more than 2 years for the process of this appeal.

On 21.06.2018, Journalist Chamara Sampath had requested the Parliament to submit separately the name lists of MPs who submitted their declarations of assets and liabilities for the year 2018 and also for the year 2010 to present.

The Information Officer of Parliament refused to provide the information mentioning that he cannot provide the requested information and that the request should be forwarded to the Speaker in accordance with the Assets and Liabilities Act.

After repeated rejections of the appeal, the RTI Commission ordered the Parliament to provide the information requested by the journalist who compiled the appeal as the requested information fell under “possession, charge or control” of the Public Authority, as per the Act.

The Right to RTI Commission has stated that it took more than two years to issue this order due to the fact that the then Presidential Secretariat had to wait until the conclusion of the petition filed before the Court of Appeal against an earlier order of the Commission to disclose the assets and liabilities of the Prime Minister who was in position at that time.

The decision issued by the Right to Information Commission on February 03, Chamara Sampath vs. the Parliament of Sri Lanka has issued RTIC Appeal No. 719/2019.

An extract from “The Information Commission orders the Parliament to reveal the names of MPs who claimed assets” by Chamara Sampath published on [www.rtisrilanka.lk](http://www.rtisrilanka.lk)

Attention Internet Users!

RTI  
STORIES

RTI  
STORIES

The year 2020 moved almost all businesses, education, communication and every possible day-to-day interaction online. Along with this, however, internet scams and cyber violence worldwide also saw a rise during the year. A request through the Right to Information (RTI) Act regarding the reported number of internet crimes disclosed a lot of detail on the Sri Lankan context as per the report by Sri Lanka Computer Emergency Readiness Team (SLCERT).

The response provided details about reported cyber crime detailed below;

The report also revealed that in Sri Lanka, 65% of youth who use social media reveal their email addresses, while 47% disclose their phone numbers. And 24% of young social media users have never changed their password. SLCERT's strategic data from 2019 to 2023 indicate that 30% of users do not know how to use passwords to protect important documents.

(<https://www.cert.gov.lk/Downloads/NCSStrategy.pdf>)

Despite reports from various sectors about the safety of internet users and security measures, the figures for this particular 9-month period show that we are forgetting digital security enabling the perpetuation of crime and violence online.

An extract from “Attention internet users by Team RTI of SLPI, published on [www.rtisrilanka.lk](http://www.rtisrilanka.lk)

More RTI stories could be accessed at SLPI's official RTI site.  
[rtisrilanka.lk](http://rtisrilanka.lk)



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