



Photo taken during the RTI training of “The Morning”

## Newsroom Visits of RTI Help Desk

The Sri Lanka Press Institute’s RTI Help Desk makes newsroom visits twice every year since its establishment in 2019. The main purpose of this activity is to meet with the editors and journalists in person providing an update of the ongoing activities of the RTI Help Desk. Accordingly, the members of the RTI Help Desk make visits to Sinhala, Tamil and English newsrooms.

Although the annual newsroom visits for 2020 could not be made with the pandemic, the rescheduled meetings were held in early 2021 during the month of March. Visits were made to the offices of the Daily Express, Daily Mirror, Silumina, Thinakaran, The Sunday Morning, The Morning, Deshaya, Virakesari, Thinakkural, Ceylon Today, Mawbima, Thamilan, Vidivelli and Metro newspapers.

As some of the newsrooms requested for a basic training of the RTI Act, an initial training program was facilitated at “The Morning” newspaper led by Mr.Kamal Liyanarachchi. The program was held on 7th April 2021. During the training, the journalists were made aware of the initiation of RTI in Sri Lanka, the information request procedure and the appeals procedure. Moreover, the services and operations of the RTI Help Desk were further explained responding to clarifications made by the journalists. The program was well-received by the participants.

Once the COVID-19 travel restrictions ease the remaining newsroom training sessions would resume.

## RTI Journalist's Forum

Rahul Samantha Hettiarachchi has served as a professional in the industry for more than a decade and a half.

Rahul's passion lies in the areas of investigative journalism and environmental reporting. He is currently navigating new avenues in his media career and serves as a BBC Sinhala journalist and as a freelancer for several newspapers including "Ada" and television channels such as Derana.

Rahul is an active member of the RTI Journalists' Forum of Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI). He has made use of the Information Act to obtain information in producing news features and investigative articles. He has compiled over 200 articles using the RTI Act so far.

"If I were to choose one of the most successful articles that I have ever written, I would like to mention my revelations about the maintenance costs of micro cabs in medical offices. It took me four months to complete writing this article. I was able to highlight that more money had been spent on the maintenance of the cabs than the value of the cabs. Likewise, the case brought forward the irregularities of the system and thereby the losses the government had to face."



***If a journalist or a citizen uses the RTI Act, he/she should have a sound knowledge of the proper procedures in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Thereby, they can obtain the information successfully. So I urge all citizens to use the RTI Act wisely.***

## Rahul Samantha Hettiarachchi

Sivakumaran has written a number of articles using information obtained from the Right to Information Act. The issue of the Hatton Dikkoya Municipal Council-owned grounds is significant among them. The stadium, which hosts sports and cultural events, is a place where politicians are usually cremated in the event of a funeral. He had raised questions to the respective municipal council through the Right to Information act exposing this illegal activity.

The response to the RTI stated that no funerals would be held at the ground premises in the future. Followed by the coverage of this incident in the newspaper a decision was made by the municipal council to stop hosting funerals and all such activities are currently suspended. Thus, it is one of the success stories of RTI covered by Sivakumaran.

***The reason I am interested in reporting through the Right to Information Act is that it gets to question the government and the government agencies on legal grounds. However, this is not only a sole responsibility of the journalists, the mechanism should be passed on to the public as well.***

Sivalingam Sivakumaran is working as an Assistant Editor of the Sunday Virakesari newspaper. He has 21 years of experience in the media field. He has been working for Express Newspapers (Virakesari) for 19 years. Sivalingam Sivakumaran is also the Founder Editor of Metro News and Sooriyakanthi magazine.

Sivalingam Sivakumaran is also a senior member of the RTI Forum of the Sri Lanka Press Institute. He has been attending every meeting since the beginning of the forum and has been sharing valuable ideas and experiences about RTI. It is noteworthy that so far Sivalingam Sivakumaran has reported more than 25 news through the Right to Information Act.

## Sivalingam Sivakumaran

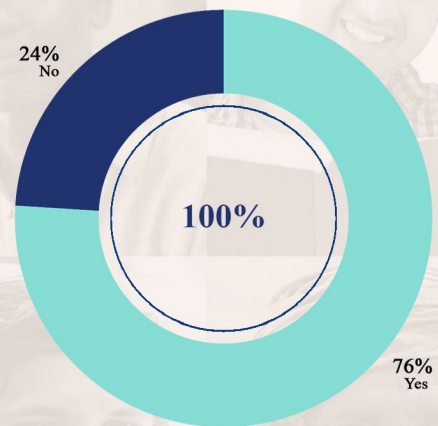


## Results from the Social Media Polls run for a duration of a week

The Right to Information Act No. 12 of 2016 provides the public with the opportunity to obtain information on a wide range of subjects from public authorities in a transparent procedure. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the public to constantly exercise their right to information.

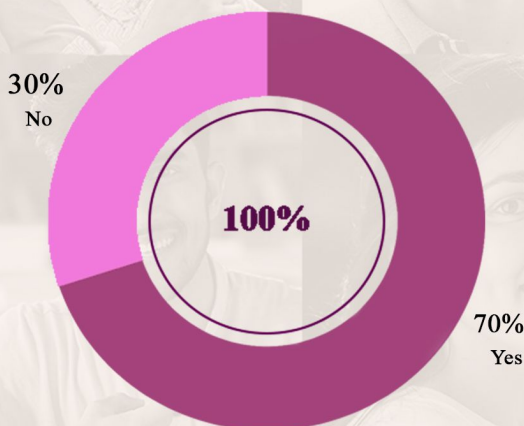
That being the case, Sri Lanka Press Institute launched a series of polls in its social media platforms (Facebook & Instagram) to assess the citizens understanding of the Right to Information Act in Sri Lanka.

### Do you know that citizens could access information from any Public Authority ?



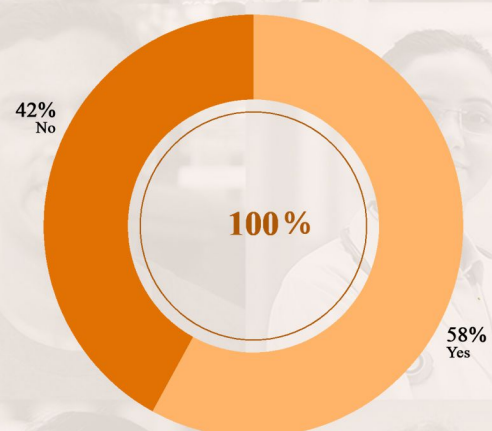
Under the Right to Information Act, any citizen of the country can request information from any public authority. Section 43 of the Right to Information Act states that information can be requested not only from Ministries and Departments but also from private companies and NGOs subject to certain conditions.

### Do you know the procedure to be followed to get the information under the RTI Act?



For the Right to Information to be meaningful, it is necessary to place procedures to obtain information easily. Any person who desires to obtain information under the RTI Act shall make a request in writing to the respective Information Officer. The Information Officer has to accept or reject your application within 14 days. If it involves the life or liberty of a person, the decision will be made within 48 hours.

### Have you received information from public authorities through the Right to Information Act?



Citizens can ask for any information that a Public Authority has with them. Public Authorities should facilitate easy and hassle-free access to information for the public. When given access to a Government file, you have the right to inspect that information; take notes, get extracts or certified copies.

# Success Stories

www.rtisrilanka.lk

The spread of COVID-19 is intensified by the day in Sri Lanka. As a result, the COVID-19 death toll is also constantly on the rise. However, the Ministry of Health has not released any analytical or detailed report regarding these deaths.

Therefore, a written request has been submitted by Rifthi Ali; a member of SLPI's RTI Journalists Forum, to the Deputy Director General in charge of the Public Health Services of the Ministry of Health on March 5 requesting further information about the Covid-19 deaths in Sri Lanka.

However, no response was released during the month in which the request was made. In this context, the information request was answered by an email on 8th June 2021 by the then Director of the Department of Infectious Diseases, Dr. Sudath Samaraweera.

Based on the data up to 2021.05.2

## DISTRIBUTION OF CONFIRMED DEATHS BY AGE, SEX AND ETHNICITY

Age Limit	Sinhalese		Muslims		Tamil		Burgur		Foreigners	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
00-09	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10-19	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
20-29	1	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
30-39	15	10	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	0
40-49	40	32	13	10	5	4	0	0	1	0
50-59	79	41	23	10	11	6	1	0	1	0
60-69	140	85	48	24	23	15	1	0	2	0
70-79	169	127	51	24	28	22	1	0	2	0
Above 80	107	97	19	13	21	17	0	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

Information on the religion of the victims is not collected by Epidemiology Unit



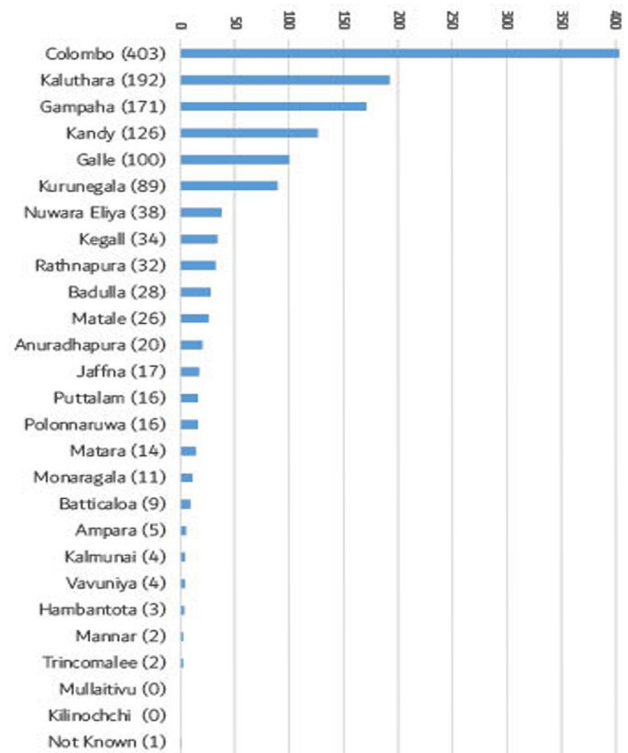
## PLACES WHERE COVID-19 DEATHS WERE REPORTED

- Hospital / QC - 1044
- On admission 115
- Home - 195
- Road / Other / Not Known - 9

Total Deaths - 1363

Hospitals	
Base Hospital - Homagama	- 165
IDH Hospital	- 111
National Hospital - Sri Lanka	- 70
Base Hospital - Mulleriyia	- 69
Teaching Hospital - Karapitiya	- 64
National Hospital - Kandy	- 58
Private Hospitals (8)	- 40
District Base Hospital - Theldeniya	- 37
Intermediate Care Centres (ICC) (6)	- 22

## DISTRICT (RDHS) DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CONFIRMED DEATHS



Colombo MC 236

- Confirmed Covid-19 cases - 177,711
- Total number of Covid-19 deaths reported from March 28, 2020 to May 28, 2021 - 1,363
- First Covid-19 death in Sri Lanka was reported on March 28, 2020.
- The oldest person to die from Covid-19 - 104 years old lady from Ginimellagaha in Galle
- The youngest person to die from Covid-19 - 08 days old infant from Pusallawa in Gampola (09.06.2021)

This analysis is prepared by Rifthi Ali as per the information received by the Epidemiology Unit of Health Ministry for his RTI application.



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



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