

Story 1

"I have my identity. But I have lost my birth certificate. When my mother fell seriously sick, I needed my EPF money to get medicine for her. To get the money through the estate, you need all the documents. It takes at least six months to get the cheque. The mudalali mahattaya prepared all the necessary documents, got me the money within a month. Since I had not taken any provisions on credit, he charged me only 7000 rupees."

Sellamma (not her real name) who has been working on the estate since she was 12 years old, is not aware that this is blatant corruption. For 35 years she has slaved on the estate. Her whole EPF savings was 245,000 rupees. She paid 7,000 to the owner of a prominent business establishment in Badulla. She was desperately in need of money.

"Mudalali went to the bank with me, cashed the cheque and took the 7000 rupees. I begged of him to reduce at least 1000 rupees considering my mother's grave illness. He just refused. What to do – at least I managed to save her with the money", she sobbed.

Story 2

"Both my sons went to work in an illegal gem mine and were caught by the police and taken away. The lawyer wanted me to find 50000 rupees to get them released on bail. My sole possession was the EPF money. The estate told me I couldn't take the money because I was less than fifty. The mudalali also told me first that because of my age I wouldn't be able to take the money. I pleaded with him. He finally asked for my pass book and gave me a loan of 20,000 rupees. He gave me another 10,000 later. When the EPF money came, he kept the money and promised to give me 50,000 rupees more after deducting charges for preparing the documents, his own fees and the loan money and the interest. I know I spent too much but I can never forget the help he gave to save my two boys."

With tear-filled eyes, "she" related the story pleading with us not to divulge any names.

Most people around here get the EPF money from the mudalali. Even if the documents are not complete, he attends to them and organises the money.

Story 3

"Most people around here get the EPF money from the mudalali. Even if the documents are not complete, he attends to them and organises the money."

Innocent estate workers victims of EPF racket

5

On 9 December...

TISL will commemorate UN Anti-Corruption Day with -

- The presentation of National Integrity Award 2008
- Launch of 'Governance Report 2008'
- Announcement of the winners of the Anti-corruption cartoon competition
- Exhibition of Cartoons

Venue: BMICH Colombo

Programmes help increase productivity

Badulla District Secretariat has won the first place in the Vva Province Productivity competition. District Secretary Rohana Keerthi Dissanayake attributes the victory to the fruitful programmes organised by TISL with the aim of changing the attitudes of officials and promoting good governance.

"Your objectives have been achieved", he confidently states in a letter to TISL.

In addition to the main award, provincial offices at Haliela, Ella, Haputale, Bandarawela and Passara have also won awards. "Winning Productivity Awards symbolizes efficiency and productivity as much as indicating good governance principles which help to curb corruption are practiced by the staff", he adds.

Immigration officials at TISL workshop

At the inauguration of a TISL training programme for the officials of the Department of Immigration & Emigration recently, Controller-General P A Abeykoon emphasised the importance of such programmes which not only educate the staff but also empower the participants of ways and means of combating corruption.

He thanked TISL for taking initiatives in good governance activities.

Taking part in the programme were Enforcement Officers and Management Assistants of the Department who are directly involved with the public. Over eight sessions, 129 officials attended the programme.

Positive response from participants

Participants at recent TISL workshops on 'Enhancing Integrity' responded positively stating that the programmes give them confidence to face societal problems tactfully. Emphasising the need to hold these programmes island-wide, they suggested that they should be held for the public as well.

The programmes held in Chitlaw and Badulla in association with the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government were attended by members of Pradesheeya Sabhas, Urban Councils and Municipalities.

INTEGRITY

Newsletter of TISL - Transparency International Sri Lanka

Issue 03 OCTOBER 2008

Worldwide condemnation of grenade attack on TISL Executive Director

Local and international organizations reacted strongly and condemned the grenade attack on the residence of TISL Executive Director J C Welliamuna on the night of 28 September and demanded action to bring the culprits to book.

Media statements were issued, a symbolic protest march was held by the lawyers, a public protest was organized by several civil society organizations and a Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) delegation met the President and urged action.

The public protest at Lipton's roundabout organized by the People's Action for Free and Fair Election (PAFFREL), Marga Institute, National Peace Council (NPC), South Asian

President's instructions

The State-run Sunday Observer in a news story titled 'Bring culprits to book- President' states that President Mahinda Rajapakse has instructed IGP Jayantha Wickramaratne to expedite investigations into the grenade attack and bring the culprits to book soon.

TISL's deep concern

Issuing a statement immediately after the incident, TISL expressed deep concern with the continuing attacks on activists, journalists and civil society. "This is another effort to curb the freedom of expression and conscience of the people of Sri Lanka."

"We vehemently oppose these acts which constricts the space to dissent", the statement said. TISL alerted all TI chapters and international organizations about the attack on its executive director and hoped that all would stand in solidarity to protect his life.

TI calls for a fair, speedy investigation

Announcing its deep concern "to intimidate anti-corruption and human rights advocates, and all those who dedicate their lives to building a better future for Sri Lanka", Transparency International called on the government of Sri Lanka to ensure a fair, speedy and transparent investigation, and to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of Welliamuna, his family and the personnel of TI Sri Lanka.

"The bombing of Welliamuna's home is the latest episode in a continuing wave of harassment of activists, journalists and civil society - seen as a concerted effort to curb the freedom of expression in Sri Lanka - although the precise motives of this perpetrator remains unclear," a statement from Berlin said..

Lawyers' demonstration (left) & demonstration by civil society organizations

Today Weliam Next

grenade attack

Reaction of the civil society

The **International Commission of Jurists** stated that the attack against a senior and well respected lawyer must be seen in the context of rising human rights violations in Sri Lanka and increasing attacks on freedom of expression and the right to dissent.

The **Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA)** described the attack as an attempt to send a broader message to those who represent the cause of good governance, accountability and integrity in public life.

Describing the attack as a violation of the rule of law itself and a downright interference with the fundamental rights of an individual, the **South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR)** unequivocally condemned the attack.

"Strongly and unreservedly" condemning the attack, the **Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL)** called upon the Police to investigate the attack without delay and bring the miscreants to justice. BASL extended its fullest support to the Police in this task.

The **Free Media Movement (FMM)** regarded the attack as "a matter of grave significance" and as an attempt to send a broader message to those who represent the cause of human rights, good governance, accountability and integrity in public life. "This reprehensible act of violent intimidation therefore is an attempt to silence critical and dissenting voices, including civil society and the media. It also represents a clear challenge to the independence and integrity of the legal profession, and contempt for the rule of law and legal processes."

The **Chamber of Commerce (CCC)** stated that the Government has a duty to create the necessary environment and protection to icons of good societal behaviour at least on par with the protection afforded to the several political personalities. It believed that it is particularly important for the authorities not only to be seen but as well as to act effectively if Sri Lanka as a country is to demonstrate that it subscribes to the values associated with good governance, transparency and human rights and that its people respect law and order.

The **Asian Human Rights Commission (AHR)** called on the Government to thoroughly investigate the matter with a Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). There is all the likelihood of the investigation being mishandled unless a special attempt is made for inquiries to be conducted by a competent and independent SIU, it said.

Commending Mr Welliamuna as "a defender of those who seek to fight corruption, protect the

Seminar

Building Integrity and Transparency in Business Relationships

03rd September 2008 Cinnamon Grand Hotel

Importance of integrity in business sector stressed

"You leave for future generations the quality of life and the resources in the world in no worse position than you found them, when you had the benefit in your life of using those resources."

"a company nowadays needs to see itself really as a subject within society and needs to earn the license from that society to operate"

Elaborating on the bribery and corruption issue, he said that VA Systems, one of the largest defence companies in the world, is being investigated currently in ten countries. The country where there is the most grievous abuse is Saudi Arabia. He then described the Siemens case which has attracted a lot of attention throughout the world.

Referring to values and standards incorporated within a good system of corporate governance, he said that a company nowadays needs to see itself really as a subject within society and needs to earn the license from that society to operate. The legal framework gives the right to operate in a certain way, but overall there is an obligation back to society to earn the respect from society to continue to operate, he said. This is really CSR which has three sections referred to as 'the triple bottom line' – environment, social and economic.

Sustainability is another way of thinking about your responsibility to the society in which you operate, he pointed out. He quoted a "Norwegian brunt lad" who said:

India's Right to Information Act well accepted

Cooperation extended by public servants, their willingness to work with NGOs and the keen interest shown by the public have made the Right to Information Act in India work smoothly. It has been well accepted by all parties. This is the observation of TISL's Programme Manager, Dhanushka Wijekoon, who attended a 10-day internship programme in New Delhi, India organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives.

The Act has enabled the public to submit grievances and raise issues of bribery and corruption against public officials. Anyone can pay ten rupees (process fee), get an application form, fill it up and hand over to the respective government department to obtain details of a particular grievance and seek redress. The information has to be given within thirty days. The official concerned has to pay a penalty in case the information is not supplied on time.

Every government office has an assigned officer (designated Public Information Officer - PIO), at a senior level to deal with public complaints and grievances.

In charge of the implementation of the Act is a central body – Central Information Commission (CIC).

Just as much as NGOs strive to create awareness and help the public, the State TV, Doordarshan broadcast a weekly programme titled 'Right to Know'. According to the producers, they have been given complete freedom with no restrictions or censoring of news aired on the programme. It gives publicity to success stories as well thereby encouraging public officers to do their duty properly.

During the visit, Dhanushka met Siddharth Pandey, the Chief Correspondent of NDTV, a private channel who is the winner of the Journalism Award organised by TI India.

'An assault on courage and integrity'

Commenting on the grenade attack, a close associate of TISL, Dr. Gopakumar Thampi, former Head of Asia Desk, Transparency International, Berlin and currently, Director of Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore India sent this statement:

The language of violence has yet again been invoked to silence the brave. The bombing of Mr. J.C. Welliamuna's house serves another chilling reminder on the perils of standing up for justice and transparency.

Corruption is a strange business. For those indulging in it, corruption is often a low risk and high return proposition. And for those bravely confronting it, the price is often too high. Welliamuna is a much respected crusader of human rights in Sri Lanka and the nation's best known graft-buster.

This is not a moment to panic and snuggle into a shell. This is a time for all civic minded people in Sri Lanka to come out and join hands against the forces of intimidation and fear. This is not a time to wallow in a culture of silence. But a moment to celebrate a solidarity against the scourges of corruption and abuses. The message behind the grenades is clear – we are winning and they are losing. Make no mistake about it. We are facing the enemies of democracy to be on the run. It is cowards on flight who speak the language of guns and bombs. The resilience of a nation is best tested during such times. Times which call for society in general to stand up and proclaim in a loud voice "We won't be cowed down!" I am a firm believer of the will of the people. I believe that it is the collective expression and desire for freedom and justice that makes democracy such a coveted ideal. It is this belief which

Sri Lanka is 92nd in the Corruption Index

Sri Lanka occupies the 92nd position among 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2008 conducted by Transparency International (TI), the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption.

Sri Lanka's score remains at 3.2 indicating a serious corruption problem in the public sector. Among the neighbouring countries, only India (3.4) and Sri Lanka are above a score of 3 with Maldives (2.8), Nepal (2.7), Pakistan (2.5) and Bangladesh (2.1) remaining with low scores. Analysts attribute India's position to the implementation of the Right to Information Act.

The Index ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians.

It measures each country's level of corruption and places it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 stands for 'highly clean' and 0 stands for 'highly corrupt'.

For more details : <http://www.tisrilanka.org>

Sri Lanka is 92nd in the Corruption Index

During the visit, Dhanushka met Siddharth Pandey, the Chief Correspondent of NDTV, a private channel who is the winner of the Journalism Award organised by TI India.