

"We should build a corrupt free country"

The need to build a waste and corrupt free country at least for the future generation was stressed by the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Administration, D. Dissanayake when he addressed the TISL/Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) Training Workshop on 'Enhancing integrity in the Public Service' recently.

Twenty two government officials from Kurunegala and Badulla Districts participated in the three-day Workshop held at the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research Training Institute. Officials from District Secretariats, Local Government Pradeshiya Sabhas, and Departments of Police, Health and Irrigation were among the participants.

Pointing out that the discipline in the public service and also in the civil society has eroded severely and that waste is enormous, Mr. Dissanayake said that when people do wrong we should try to correct them. "Let's do even the very little that we can do and make an impact among those around us. Let's correct ourselves and then the ones around us and likewise we can go forward," he said.

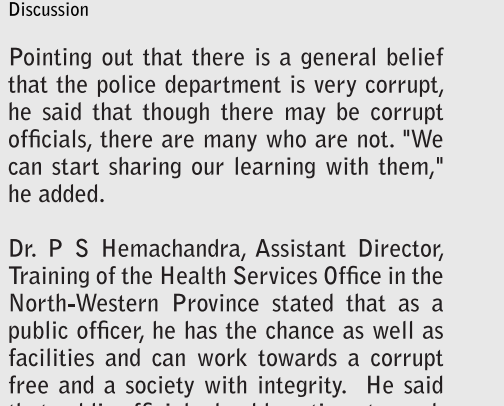
Commenting on the workshop, a participant, Saman Kumari Dharmakeerthi attached to the Department of Motor Traffic in Kurunegala Divisional Secretariat said that not only did she learn on integrity, but also about the skills of a good trainer leadership and other subjects which are useful to be trainers.

"All of us should practice the knowledge gained on integrity and how to mitigate waste and corruption in our own workplaces. Then, we should take this message across to our colleagues," she said. She felt that the message should be taken across to everyone in the country and then only it would be easy for public servants to perform.

"What happens mostly is that people who come to obtain services do not know their rights. We should help them," G. Jayaratne working at the Wariyapola police station said, "Awareness is the best. When, the public servants and the general public is aware of the subject, it will be easy to perform."



Mr. Dissanayake speaks



Discussion

Pointing out that there is a general belief that the police department is very corrupt, he said that though there may be corrupt officials, there are many who are not. "We can start sharing our learning with them," he added.

Dr. P. S. Hemachandra, Assistant Director, Training of the Health Services Office in the North-Western Province stated that as a public officer he has the chance as well as facilities and can work towards a corrupt free and a society with integrity. He said that public officials should continue to work without getting labeled politically. He was working towards a waste free model office and an office with integrity, he said confidently. "My target is five years, may be I can achieve it before that."

Irregular DPL appointments

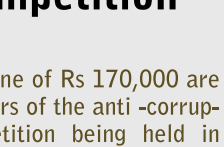
"All safeguards must be made to prevent the Head of State abusing constitutional power to make appointments including Heads of Missions. This should include published criteria for such appointments, an effective and transparent scrutiny by Parliament and by the Constitutional Council." TISL states in a Position Paper on appointments to the Sri Lanka Foreign Service (SLFS).

The need to make all appointments governed under the SLFS by the Public Service Commission (PSC) strictly from among the Foreign Service officers has been stressed in the Paper just released by TISL. "At no stage should the Cabinet exercise these powers contrary to the 17th Amendment to the Constitution," the paper says.

In a detailed paper titled 'Integrity of recruitment in SLFS', TISL analyzes the critical issues arising out of the recruitment process as it happens now and stresses the need to formulate and adopt criteria based on international best practices "to prevent the questionable recruitments in the Foreign Service."

Pointing out the need for a sovereign state to have an extremely professional Foreign Service, the paper emphasizes that it is not intended to cover up failures at home but conduct foreign affairs in cooperative and holistic manner. Quoting the President's address to Sri Lanka's diplomats in October 2006 regretting that the country's Foreign Service is not carrying out their tasks very well, the Position Paper calls it a serious situation which can only be addressed by genuine commitment to establish a professional foreign service devoid of any kind of partiality. "There is a visible politicization of the Foreign Service in Sri Lanka to the detriment of the interests of the country for almost four decades," the paper says. Giving numerous instances when Foreign Service appointments have been approved by the Cabinet, the paper concludes that unsuitable and unwarranted appointments continue in high scale and that this practice has demoralized the SLFS.

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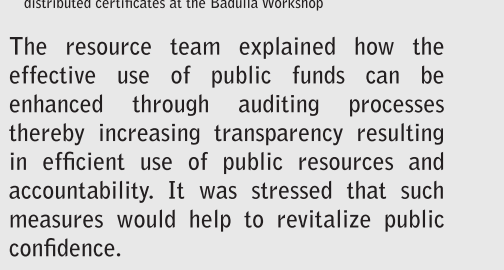


Growing gap between public and officials highlighted

Lack of public participation and the concern of a growing gap between the public and local government officials were raised by the participants who attended a workshop on integrity held in Badulla recently.

Concepts of good governance and anti-corruption measures were discussed at the workshop organized by TISL in association with the Sri Lanka Institute for Local Government (SLILG). 18 local government officials were selected from among different levels of local government serving in Pradeshiya Sabhas, urban and municipal councils.

Lack of transparency in government transactions, misuse and abuse of public funds, land encroachments by private individuals, lack of confidence in decision-makers and the ineffective use of public resources were among other topics discussed. Bribery and corruption among public and technical officers was also brought up.



Director-SLILG Nimal Bandara & TISL Chairman M.D.A. Harold distributed certificates at the Badulla Workshop

The resource team explained how the effective use of public funds can be enhanced through auditing processes thereby increasing transparency resulting in efficient use of public resources and accountability. It was stressed that such measures would help to revitalize public confidence.

The participants felt that the workshop resulted in providing public officials with a better understanding on how problems of inefficiency and corruption can be resolved in a practical manner through transparency and accountability.

Anti-corruption cartoon competition now on

Cash prizes to the tune of Rs 170,000 are on offer to six winners of the anti-corruption cartoon competition being held in connection with this year's UN Anti Corruption day falling on 9 December. In addition, seven merit awards will also be given to the winners.

The competition is in two parts – one for youth (below 18 years) and the other for adults (over 18 years). The first prize in the youth category is Rs 40,000 with the second and third prizes being Rs 20,000 and Rs 10,000 each. In the adult category, the prizes are Rs 50,000 (first), Rs 30,000 (second) and Rs 20,000 (third).

The cartoon competition is aimed at those with an artistic flavour and a strong vision to eradicate bribery and corruption. The cartoons must be original creations of the participants and should not have been published previously.

A3 paper is the size of the paper on which the cartoons must be submitted.

The deadline for entries is 1 September 2008. Further details can be obtained from the TISL office at 28/1 Bullers Lane Colombo 7. (011 2 501474)

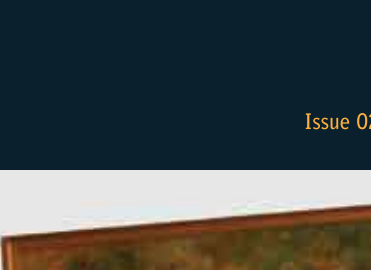
Talking to journalists on corruption

With the principal objective to enhance the capacity of journalists in reporting on development issues while improving the skills on tracking developmental activities, TISL and Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) collaboratively conducted a mid career workshop with a group of 20 journalists on "Development Journalism" in June 2008.



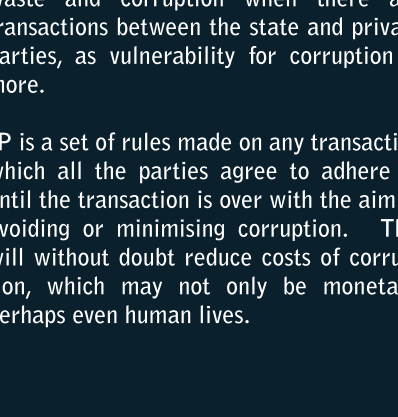
Addressing the journalists, TISL Executive Director J. C. Welliamuna said that anti-corruption and good governance had been talked about from the mid 1990s. He then explained the concept of the Integrity Temple developed by Transparency International using the example of a building. Good governance represents the roof of the building. Strong pillars are needed to give

support to roof. The legislature, the executive, the judiciary, the auditor general, ombudsman, watchdog agencies, media, civil society, private sector and the international actors represent the pillars. For the pillars to be strong, a good foundation is required. This is provided by public awareness and societal values.



When the foundation of social values and public awareness is strong, the pillars will be strong and the roof of the good governance will be stable. Then the goals of sustainable development and quality of life could be assured and the Rule of Law in a country is expected to prevail.

TISL Deputy Executive Director, Rukshana



Nanayakkara introduced a new concept – Integrity Pact (IP) – a way to minimize waste and corruption when there are transactions between the state and private parties, as vulnerability for corruption is more.

IP is a set of rules made on any transaction which all the parties agree to adhere to until the transaction is over with the aim of avoiding or minimising corruption. This will without doubt reduce costs of corruption, which may not only be monetary, perhaps even human lives.

Good response to Members' Day

Members from the distant Hambantota in the South and Pussellawa in the hill country were among those who turned up to celebrate the first-ever TISL Members' Day held at the Galadari Hotel, Colombo on 20 June 2008.

The Members' Day followed the Annual General Meeting presided over by Chairman M. D. A. Harold where the audited accounts were passed along with several resolutions relating to the movement of directors.

Among the members was Aritha Wickrem-anayake, whose brainchild it was to set up the Sri Lanka Chapter of Transparency International.

Welcoming the members TISL Executive Director J. C. Welliamuna thanked the members for their presence and introduced each one of them to the audience. He later distributed certificates of membership and invited the members to take the TISL Pledge which the members did with much enthusiasm.

The members listened with interest to the progress of TISL activities presented by TISL Deputy Executive Director Rukshana Nanayakkara who touched on the work undertaken by the various divisions.

The financial highlights were presented by Finance Manager Dilshan Weerasinghe said that Sri Lanka Chapter had

It was then the members turn to make comments on the activities of TISL. Voicing his sentiments G. K. Rajendran, Principal of Saraswathi Central College, Pussellawa said that TISL has been well accepted and people are appreciative of its efforts to eliminate corruption and promote integrity.

Reminding of the hardship undergone by tsunami victims, Susantha Beddage, a teacher and an activist in community level anti-corruption programmes from Hambantota pointed out that people are looking up to TISL to get their problems solved.

At the fellowship that followed, the members got to know the TISL staff and they exchanged pleasantries.

Sri Lanka seen as a success story



"Other countries in the region saw Sri Lanka as a success story," says TISL Deputy Executive Director Rukshana Nanayakkara who recently attended the TI Asia Pacific (TIAP) Regional conference in Manila, Philippines.

"In addition to discussing the strategies for the next four years, the meeting gave us the opportunity to interact with all in the Asia Pacific Region," Rukshana said.

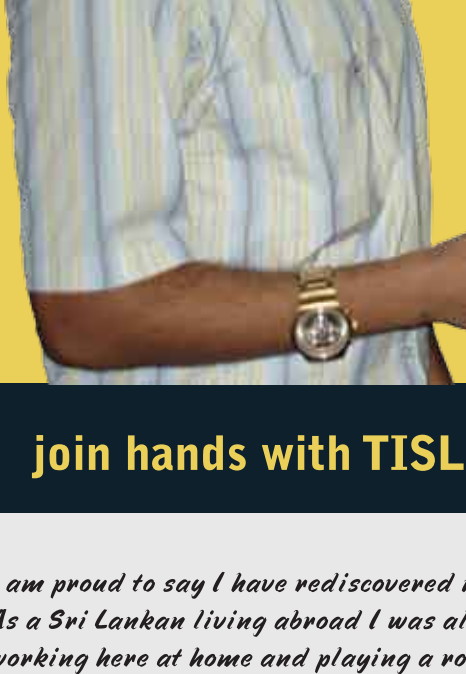
Rukshana who attended the meeting with TISL's Finance Manager Dilshan Weerasinghe said that Sri Lanka Chapter had

shared its confidence in its strategy, the vision, the mission and the firm standing on its fund-raising strategy.

The discussion on the Integrity Pact had been a welcoming subject.

Sri Lanka Chapter is developing an integrity pact for local government institutions. Through identified indicators the institutions identify whether they are reducing waste and corruption and whether they are on the track to maintain integrity.

A valuable experience



join hands with TISL

"My motivation to work with TISL as an intern came from a desire to experience first hand the activities of an INGO in a third world country context", says Kalrav Rakesh Mishra, a 4th year undergraduate from Bangalore who returned recently having worked with TISL.

Kalrav preferred TISL to TI India since Sri Lanka has been in the throes of a civil conflict for over two decades and its development potential has been sidelined. "Prolonged conflict and a state of emergency always tend to push democratic norms into the background, and along with them accountability, transparency and integrity in public functionaries and institutions. In such a scenario, the role of civil society groups and INGOs like TI assumes special significance", he observes.

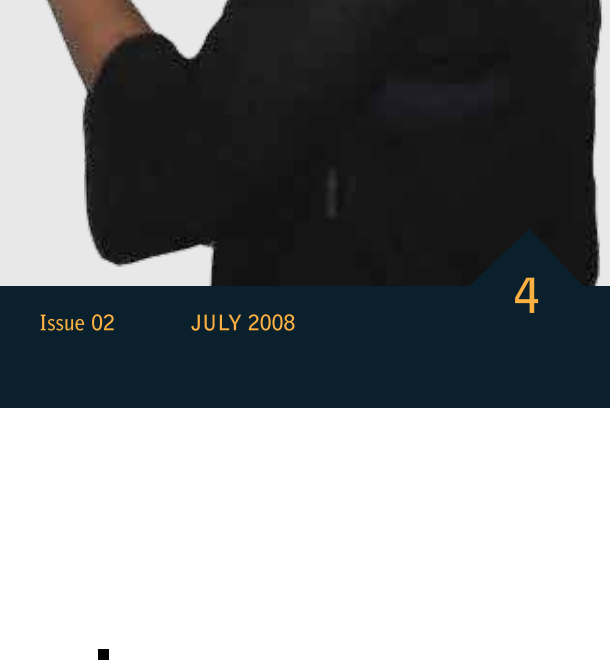
In a note on his thoughts about his stint with TISL, he writes:

"Sri Lanka has great potential for rapid development. It is fortunately not plagued by many of the problems faced by other nations in the South Asian region (overpopulation, energy and food shortages, for instance); but for the conflict, Sri Lanka would easily have been amongst the more prosperous countries in the world. However, given the current situation here, it opens up avenues for corruption and misfeasance in governance."

I am proud to say I have rediscovered my passion for Sri Lanka. As a Sri Lankan living abroad I was always interested in working here at home and playing a role in Sri Lanka's overall development. It is through this internship and personal experiences that I have understood the lethal function of corruption in Sri Lankan society.

However it is the butterfly effect of problems such as corruption that cause for greater concern as side-effects are both eminent and long-enduring: like a disease without a cure, corruption is crippling Sri Lanka's potential for prosperity. While interning with TISL I gained insights into the functions and limitations of an INGO, as well as the potential for change that can be advocated through the people, with a little dedication and effort. Though still in its cocoon, I believe that TISL is reaching its breakthrough point as a national chapter of an INGO that could in future time provide a bite with its bark. It has been an honour to serve with such an establishment and to witness first-hand the practical application of their principles through their programs in advocacy, education, representation and monitoring.

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If you are interested in working as an intern at TISL, please submit your CV to the Deputy Director/TISL. All internships will run from three weeks to six months.

rukshana@tisrilanka.org

Focus on Corruption

The tale of a swimming pool

Nine years ago, the Badulla Municipal Council started constructing a swimming pool to be used by children. Ten million rupees has been spent on the project up to date. Yet the pool is not ready.

"This is an instance which illustrates the misuse of public funds," says Mr. Zuhair, a nearby resident. "Mosquitoes infestation has increased. The stench from the water is unbearable. A stray dog or a cow invariably falls into the pool at least once in two weeks polluting the water in the pool and the people of the area have to remove the dead animals. I had to pull out a dead dog even last week."

Mr. Zuhair says that that despite informing the officials repeatedly, a solution has still not been found.

Mayor Upali Nissanka Gunaratne agreed that there is a basis for the concerns raised by the public. Pointing out that the money used for the project is what has been collected by the Municipal Council in the form of taxes, he admits that he is caught in a dilemma whether to spend more money on the pool which is found to be sub standard. He said that he hopes to take necessary action once he receives the report from the audit division which is conducting an investigation into possible malpractices that have taken place in the construction of the pool.

Meanwhile, files containing information relating to the expenditure incurred in construction work are reported missing. However, civil societies have alleged that information about the missing files has not been officially turned over to the public. The Mayor admitted that there is some truth in the allegation.



Mayor



Former Mayor

"Its true... I looked into this after I was elected. The initial files are missing. They have been misplaced. But not all files have been misplaced. We still have a considerable amount of information with us. There is no necessity for the municipal council to keep this information away from the people. If any civil society organization requests me to provide information, I will be obliged to provide them with that information."

However the Mayor was unable to state an amount that has been spent on the construction of the swimming pool. He said that, to say the least, it's even difficult to state the amount expended in lakhs as the documentation of the expenditure is extremely unclear.

Former Mayor M.D.A. Hemachandra stated that, this was not a construction done automatically. "This was done after a collective decision was taken by the council. The plan was made by the officials of the Sports Ministry. All the plans are in my possession."

"Unfortunately Badulla was flooded during the initial stages of the construction of the pool and there was some damage to the construction after which the original contractor stopped work. Then we got a second contractor and completed the construction to an extent. The work that is left to be done is very uncomplicated and basic."

He also said that this was the first time that he heard of the allegation that the files were missing.

Mr. Hemachandra said, "I had handed over all the papers and files to the relevant authorities when I vacated office. This is a surprising story. Nothing has gone wrong in this project. If a proper audit is conducted malpractices will be discovered if there has been any."

A senior officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service told TISL that even if one rupee has been misused, an inquiry should be held and the guilty parties should be taken to task.

He added: "Ten million rupees in Badulla is a lot of money. All that is the tax money paid by the people. As a public official I have taken immense pains to expose this act. I have not given up that effort. However, the public and the civil society organizations which should have benefited from this money, do not show enough interest in this issue."

It does not seem that the representatives who have been elected to the municipal council have debated this issue extensively. Something has gone wrong somewhere.

Many are the questions to be asked:

•Where does a swimming pool fit among the priorities of the people of Badulla?

•Was a feasibility study done before selecting the low lying land? If so, what is contained in the feasibility report?

•Was a proper procedure adopted when selecting the contractor and making payments to him?

•Who are the contractors of this swimming pool? Are they qualified to build swimming pools?

•Should the people treat the misplacement of public records as a deficiency?

•What are the deficiencies that you think are existent in this system?

•What can you do as a public officer, people's representative, civil society organization or as a citizen who is concerned about good governance?

TISL appreciates your response. Assist us to communicate your ideas as well as our conclusions to relevant stakeholders.

Advocacy and Monitoring Department, Transparency International Sri Lanka, 28/1, Bullers Lane, Colombo 7.

up coming events

National Integrity Awards 2008

TISL will hold Sri Lanka's fifth National Integrity Awards at the BIMICH – Colombo, on the 9th of December 2008. Individuals who have risked their lives positions and future in preserving integrity in any sector in the fight against corruption are eligible for nomination.

Building Integrity in Business Relationships
TISL is planning a seminar on 'Building Integrity in Business Relationships' in September in the Cinnamon Grand Hotel.

The seminar targets senior managers and CEOs, corporate lawyers and auditors, and senior representatives of regulatory bodies.

It will familiarize participants with recent international and national treaties, regulation and principles, and introduce the TI Business Principles for Countering Bribery.

Training Workshops

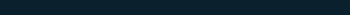
Training workshops on enhancing integrity for officials of the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE).

Anti-Corruption Awareness building programmes
A series of Anti-Corruption Awareness building programmes are planned in Collaboration with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) for the public officials at regional level.

Anti-Corruption Conference(IACC)
The 13th IACC 'Global Transparency – Fighting Corruption for a Sustainable Future' dealing with critical issues such as Human security, climate change, compromised livelihoods and energy security will be held in Athens, Greece from 30 October – 02 November 2008.

Information can be found at:
http://www.13iacc.org/

Founder of TI here for UN Anti-Corruption Day



The founder of Transparency International (TI), Peter Eigen will be the chief guest at this year's Anti-Corruption Day celebrations in Colombo on 9 December. Several activities have been planned by Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) to mark the United Nations Anti-Corruption Day at the BIMICH.

This is the fifth successive year that TISL is commemorating the Day. High on the agenda of the Day's activities is the presentation of the National Integrity Awards 2008.

Individuals / organisations fighting corruption will be recognised and honoured for their courage and determination in a bid to make such people a source of inspiration for the movement against corruption. Nominations are being received by TISL until 15 August for the Award.

Prize winners of the anti-corruption cartoon competition now being conducted will be announced that day and a selection of cartoons will be exhibited.

Another special event will be the release of TISL's Annual Good Governance Report for 2008.

The keynote address will be delivered by Mr. Eigen, the ninth winner of the prestigious 'Reader's Digest European of the Year Award' chosen by the Editors-in-Chief of the 18 European editions of the magazine.

A World Bank official Mr. Eigen first encountered corruption in government contracts in Kenya. Disgusted by the many dubious schemes he came across, he appealed to his bosses at the World Bank to confront the issue head-on, but they refused. Frustrated and disillusioned, he retired in 1991 and two years later launched Transparency International, a non-government organisation, in Berlin, where it is still based.