

Power to the People



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Sarvodaya

Did you know?

That you, as a Sri Lankan citizen have a fundamental right of access to information held by public authorities.

That means,

You have the right to find out about the actions and decisions taken by the representatives that you appointed using your valuable vote and all other public officers.

To explain further...

- Information is as important to you as water, food and air is.
- Information comes from decisions made by public officers, using public funds. So you have the right to access that information.
- Information must be preserved for the benefit of the public. Public officers therefore, must not hide information from you.

What is information ?

“Knowledge is power”. We gain 'knowledge' from information. Information is therefore, an important tool for you and is needed in all your daily activities.

This information we can receive are of different forms.



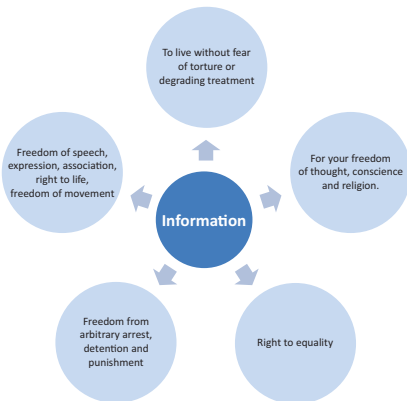
What are public authorities?

There are many public authorities. The following are some of them:

- Ministries
- Government departments
- Local government authorities
- Police
- Courts and tribunals
- Private education institutes which are publicly funded or established by written law
- Publicly funded higher education institutes

Why is the Right to Information important to you?

Accessing information is important for the protection of your other fundamental rights well.



What can you ask for?

Why do only some people get benefits?



What is the criteria used in selecting someone for a job?



How many marks did you receive in an interview?



Why was your child not admitted to school?



And other information that is important to your day-to-day life can be accessed through your right to information.

Benefits of the Right to Information

- To solve issues that arise in your day to day activities
- To reduce or eliminate corruption in the country
- To ensure media freedom and freedom of the press
- To limit state expenditure
- To question higher level government policies
- For free and fair elections
- To know about and protect your right to information

- For economic development
- To obtain swift public service

Many countries around the world have ensured the right to information.

Eg : Australia, China, South Africa, Thailand, Germany, India

Here are two simple examples of how Indians make use of the Right to Information.

Nannu, a daily wage-earner living in the slums, had lost his ration card. He applied to the relevant authority to get a new ration card. He was supposed to receive it within 10 days, but even after 3 months he had not.

Nannu therefore with the help of a civil society organization, made a request for information from the authority under his right to information. He asked for a progress report of his application from the day he applied, the names of officers who failed to handle his application in the required manner, what and when the authority will

take action against such officers and when he will receive his ration card.



As soon an RTI request was made, the officer in charge at the authority asked him to collect his ration card and treated him well. In the end he even asked him to withdraw his request for information in fear of receiving punishments.

Kavina, a small school girl, made a request for information from the public authority inquiring as to why her village did not have a bus service. Their response was that it was unprofitable, but it was proven that it was in fact profitable. As a result of this request made by the small girl, the village received a bus service.





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