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இலங்கை பத்திரிகை முறைப்பாட்டு ஆணைக்குழு

Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka

e-Newsletter

Vol 02: No: 11 - December 2012

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Happy Christmas and a Bright and Prosperous New year



PCCSL receives 174 complaints this year

The Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL) received a total of 174 complaints between the periods January to December 2012. Of the total number of complaints received only 131 were valid complaints on which the PCCSL could take action. Fifty of these complaints were successfully concluded with the publication of the 'Right to Reply.'

The balance 43 complaint files were closed. They fell into two categories 'Out of mandate of the PCCSL' which were complaints that had no bearing on the work of the PCCSL and 'Sub-judice' which were complaints that were pending in courts and could not be investigated into. (See chart)

In addition the PCCSL observed a number of violations of the Code and brought it to the notice of the respective editors. Some of them were inappropriate photographs, stories giving undue description especially on reports of suicide and stories referring to a person's race in a prejudicial or pejorative way.

The PCCSL noted that complainants had also made use of the public notice appearing in newspapers - 'Right of Readers' - and have directed them direct to editors. This way in 2012 a total of 344 complaints have been resolved with the publication of a clarification, correction and/or apology. Of this 285 appeared in the Sinhala media, 06 in the Tamil media and 53 in the English media.

During Newsrooms meetings with journalists and editors, they were explained the Code as a useful professional tool to make their stories balanced and accurate. All norms of good ethical practices thereby upholding social responsibility in their reportage were stressed.

Journalists were told to protect democracy, good governance, freedom of expression and the fundamental rights of people while keeping them informed of events that were of public interest.

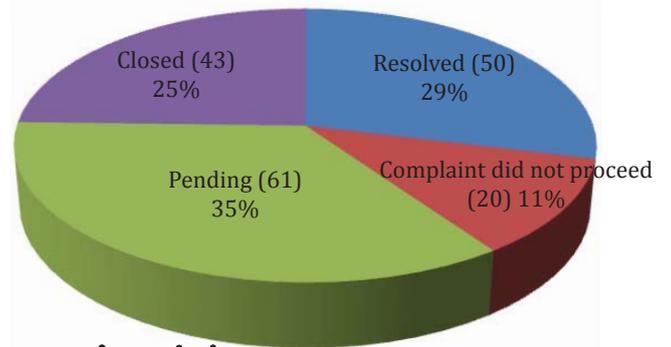
This year also saw the introduction of a logically user-friend-

ly Rules and Procedures to help complainants understand the process of resolving complaints through three stages of conciliation, mediation and arbitration. The new Complaint Form entertains complaints against magazines, journals and online newspapers of the printed version including third party complaints. The new PCCSL Web Page will be up and running in early January making it easier for complaints to be made in Sinhala, Tamil and English and submitted online.

The Code of Professional Practice is being reviewed by a team comprising Mr. Nihal Seneviratne, Ms. Kishali Pinto Jayawardena, Dr. T. Thamilaran, Prof. Tissa Kaiyawasam, Prof. Tudor Weerasinghe, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. Sinha Ratnanga and Mr. Manik de Silva. The Code is reviewed once every two years and will be completed in January 2013.

Complaints Summary

Complaints received from January - December 2012



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Sixth Annual All-Island Essay Competition

The Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL), in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, conducted its sixth Annual All Island Essay Competition in November/December this year.

The All Island Essay Competition is organized every year to bring about greater awareness of the PCCSL, importance of self-regulation and the Code of Professional Practice.

The essay competition is open to all students of grades 12 and 13, studying in Sinhala, Tamil or English medium. In order to be eligible, students must have either won, or placed second or third in the Creative Writing Competition conducted by the Ministry of Education.

Topics were decided by the PCCSL after which letters were sent to those students informing them of the five topics. Each student must then write a 750-word essay in the presence of a teacher or the principal and forward it to the PCCSL with the certification of the teacher or principal that it is the student's own work. The essay will also have to be written in 1 ½ hours. A copy of the student's letter along with a letter from the Ministry of Education was sent to the principal.

All essays were evaluated by an independent panel of judges, consisting of editors and Ministry of Education officials on December 14, 2012.

The winners were informed by mail to attend a prize-giving ceremony organised by the PCCSL. There will be three prizes for each language. The first place winner will receive a cash prize of Rs. 5,000 while the second and third place winners will receive Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 3,000 respectively. The winning students and

the accompanying parent, teacher or principal will be paid a traveling honorarium to attend the awards ceremony.

The prizegiving was held on Friday, December 21, 2012 in the SLPI Auditorium.

Prize Winners

Sinhala Medium

First: Miss. Krishanthi Nalika Rathnayaka

Galenbidunuwawa Central College, Anuradhapura

Second: Miss. Hettiarachchilage Chanuka Prasadini

St. Gabriel's Balika School, Hatton

Third: Miss. Harshika Ruwandima Piyasiri

Beddegama Maha Vidyalaya, Badulla

Tamil Medium

First: Miss. M. M. S. Naseeha

Ahatumulla Muslim Maha Vidyalaya –Nagollagoda, Kuli-

yapitiya

Second: Mr. S. Ruwutharan

Navithanveli Annamalai Maha Vidyalaya, Navithanveli

Third: Miss. A. R. Mahira Bagam

Al Rifai Maha Vidyalaya, Polonnaruwa

English Medium

First: Miss. Amizhthini Nakkeeran

Vembadi Girls' High School, Jaffna

Second: Mr. Kasun Chandeepra Jayakody

Dharmarja College, Kandy

Third: Ms. Ashwini Iroshica Balachandran

Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena



The Panel of Judges sift through the entrees.



Chief Guest Dispute Resolution Council Chairman Sam Wijesinha talks to the winner (Sinhala Medium) Miss. Krishanthi Nalika Rathnayaka of Galenbidunuwawa Central College, Anuradhapura. Also in the picture are: Member of the Panel of Judges & PCCSL Board Director Seetha Ranjane (L) Ministry of Education Co-curricular Guidance, Counselling and Peace Education Director Col. A.D.M.D. Bandara (R).

• Lord Justice Leveson Report

Overview of the main recommendations

On July 06, 2011 British Prime Minister David Cameron announced in Parliament that Lord Justice Leveson would head an inquiry that would further investigate the phone hacking scandals that culminated in the Milly Dowler case (a murdered teenager whose phone was hacked into by the *News of the World*) and allegations of illicit payments to police by the Murdoch press.

The Report was released November 29, 2012. Following are the key recommendations of the Leveson Report:

- Newspapers and magazines should continue to be self-regulated.
- There should be a new press regulatory body which is created by the newspaper and magazine industry.
- The regulatory body should be free of "any influence from industry and government". It should be governed by an independent board, and the Chairman and the members of the board must be appointed in a genuinely open, transparent and independent way.
- The self-regulatory body should be backed up by a statutory verification process to ensure that the self-regulatory body meets the required

levels of independence and effectiveness set out in the Report. Lord Justice Leveson recommends this to give the public confidence that their complaints would be dealt with seriously, and to ensure that the press are protected from interference.

• The Report also suggests the possibility of an amendment-style law so that legislation would "place an explicit duty on the government to uphold and protect the freedom of the press". Membership of the new regulator would continue to be voluntary. There would be an incentive to be a member through the provision of a new, low-cost arbitration service on civil matters like libel. The Report also suggests the possibility of Ofcom (the broadcast regulator) acting as a backstop regulator for those publishers not prepared to join such a self-regulatory scheme. This is significant and quite complicated – let me know if you want more details on this point.

• On a more practical level, Lord Justice Leveson recommends that the new body have the power to fine newspapers or magazines. He says that the watchdog should have "sufficient powers to carry out investigations both into suspected serious or systemic breaches of the code".

Awareness Programme with Military, STF and Police

The Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL) in its ongoing meetings to make people aware of the Rules and Procedures in making a complaint, the Code of Professional Practice which all print media journalists should adhere to and the importance of self regulation as opposed to controlled regulation has organised a series of programmes with editors, journalists, civil society and school children.

The PCCSL On December 06, 2012 organised an awareness programme with the Ministry of Defence, Media Centre for National Security, Security Forces, STF and Police Media Units. The programme was held in the Auditorium of the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI).



PCCSL Complaints Officer (Sinhala print media) and Promotions Officer Kamal Liyanarachchi addresses Media Units of the Ministry of Defence, Security Forces, Media Centre for National Security, STF, Police and Civil Defence Force on December 6, 2012. at SLPI Auditorium.



PCCSL Chief Executive Officer Mr. Sukumar Rockwood addresses Media Units of the Ministry of Defence, Security Forces, Media Centre for National Security, STF, Police and Civil Defence Force on December 6, 2012. at SLPI Auditorium.



Front row from left: Brig G.V. Ravipriya, Army Media Spokesman, Brig Ruvan Wanigasooriya, Military Spokesman and Commander Kosala Warnakulasooriya, Navy Spokesman.

Programmes in Gampaha

The PCCSL in its ongoing programme of conducting awareness of its activities visited Gampaha on December 11th and held a series of seminars at the Saketha Medura.

A total of 27 journalists participated in the provincial journalism training programme at which they were taught the importance of self regulation as opposed to controlled regulation and why the Code of Professional Practice is important to all practicing journalists.

Visits were also made to 10 libraries namely: Gampaha Public Library, Kumarathunga Children's Library, Gampaha Pradeshiya Sabha Henarathgama public Library, Galahitiyawa Public Library, Imbulgoda public Library, Yakkala Public Library, Bandaranaike Memorial Library,

Nittambuwa Public Library, Negambo Public Library, Kochchikade and Thaladena Public Libraries.

Posters of the PCCSL were displayed in Sinhala, Tamil and English highlighting the Code of Professional Practice by which all journalists should adhere to.

Posters outlining the Public's right to complain when an inaccurate story is published against them and steps that will be taken to resolve the complaint were also displayed.

The civil society awareness programme brought together 27 people from various professional backgrounds while the youth programme explained what is journalism and fueled interest in the youth to take up the profession.

Please see photographs on Page 04.

Programmes in Gampaha



Mr. Kamal Liyanarachchi, PCCSL Complaints Officer Sinhala Print Media and Promotions Officer, Mr. Ameer Hussain, PCCSL Complaint Officer Tamil Print Media, and Mr. M.S.N. Ayub, Consultant Editor Daily Mirror address members of the public at the Civil Society Programme.



Participants at the Civil Society Programme.



Participants at the Youth Programme during the practical session



Mr. M.S.N. Ayub addressing the Youth Programme.



Mr. Kamal Liyanarachchi explaining the importance of ethical reporting to Gampaha District Journalists.



Participants at the Journalist Programme.

Board of Directors PCCSL

Mr. Kumar Nadesan (Chairman), Mr. Nimal Welgama, Mr. Sinha Ratnatunga, Mr. Manik de Silva, Mr. N. M. Ameen, Ms. Seetha Ranjane, Mr. Siri Ranasinghe, Mr. Sundara Nihathamani de Mel, Mr. G. Koththigoda and Prof. Ajantha Hapuarachchi.

Members of the Dispute Resolution Council (DRC)

Mr. Sam Wijesinha (Chairman), Dr. Devanesan Nesiah, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. Dion Schoorman, Mr. Lucille Wijewardene, Mrs. Vjita Fernando, Mr. Siri Ranasinghe, Mr. Daya Lankapura, Mr. Pramod de Silva and Mr. V. Thevaraj.

PCCSL Secretariat

Mr. Sukumar Rockwood, CEO and Complaints Officer English Print Media, Mr. Kamal Liyanarachchi Complaints Officer Sinhala Print Media and Mr. Ameen Hussain Complaints Officer Tamil Print Media.