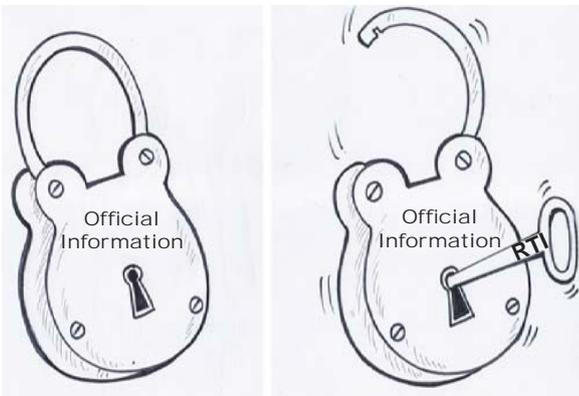

What is Right to Information?

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Who will pay my three-wheeler repair bill due to breakdown as a result of bad roads?



Q: Do I have a right to question what happened to the money allocated to repair the road in my town?

A: Yes, you have the right to question how much money was spent to repair the road. You also have the right to question if foreign money was obtained to repair the road and how much of it has really been spent. People also have the right to question how many people were paid wages to repair the road and how much the materials cost. You will then know if the money allocated for the road went to its repair or into a contractor's pocket at your expense.

How long do I have to wait to meet the principal?



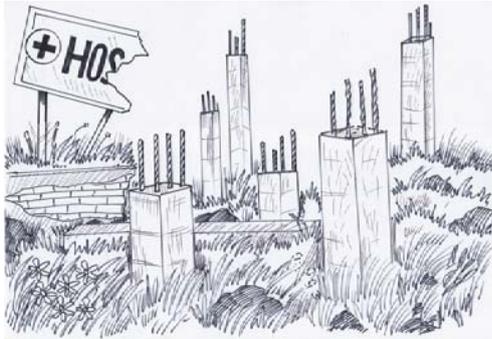
- Q:** Do I have the right to question why my child was not accepted into a State school?
- A:** Yes. You have the right to question since tax payer money among other things is used to construct school buildings, pay teachers' salaries and provide facilities for school children.

Are the officials waiting for me to fall off this make-shift bridge before commencing work on the new bridge?



- Q:** May I question my Pradeshiya Sabha as to what happened to the money that was passed at the November budget to build a proper bridge in my village?
- A:** You do have the right to question since some of the money collected for such a project is obtained from taxes levied on your property or business or indirectly from the things you buy like soap and toothpaste. You have the right to question how much money was allocated for labour and materials and the duration of the contract. You may also ask who the contractor is and why has he not started work.

How many kilometers do I have to walk to get medical attention?



Q: There was publicity that the Health Minister and a number of officials who came and laid the foundation stone to construct a small hospital in my village. The foundation was completed and suddenly after the election, work stopped. Do I have a right to question how much money was allocated from the Ministry of Health and who the contractor was? Am I permitted to ask how much money was spent and what happened to the balance money, if any?

A: Yes, you can. You can submit a request for information on this project from the Ministry of Health or its Regional Office. The Government will have to provide all the information you request within a given period of time. Otherwise, the information Authority will see you get the information and the official who didn't give you the information will be fined.

What has happened to the canal and the money?



Q: Money for a canal system was passed by Parliament to divert water to assist farmers in cultivating their paddy fields but the canal was never built. Do I have the right to find out what happened to the canal and the money.

A: You have a right to question how much money was allocated and how it has been used.

How many of these do we have?



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A: You cannot ask this type of a question as it concerns National Security

You do not have the Right to Information if your questions deal with any of the following

- Causing serious harm to the defence of the State, its territorial integrity or national security
 - Likely to be seriously prejudicial to Sri Lanka's relations with any State or international organization
 - Exchange rates or the control of overseas exchange transactions
 - Regulation of banking or credit
 - Taxation
 - Stability, control and adjustment of prices of goods and services, rents and other costs and rates of wages, salaries and other incomes
 - Borrowing of money by the Government
 - Entering into overseas trade agreements
 - Trade secrets that harm the commercial interests of any person
 - Medical records relating to any person
 - Prejudice to the prevention or detection of any crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders
 - Confidential information relating to law enforcement or national security
 - Confidential information supplied to a public authority by a third party
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What is RTI?

RTI stands for Right to Information. Since everyone pays taxes in some form or other, every person has a right to know what happens to that money. Therefore, Right to Information basically is a citizen's right to know what happens to his/her tax money, on what it is spent, and the result of the project. It also gives citizens the right to access Government information they are entitled to but that may have been kept from them for some reason.

Is the RTI law prevalent in SAARC countries?

Yes, it is a law in Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan are yet to implement the RTI as law.

Has the RTI Act been presented to Parliament?

- In 2002, the Government of the day formed a committee chaired by the then Prime Minister and including the Attorney General and representatives from the media, academia, Legal Draftsman's Department and the Ministry of Justice to draft a 'Right to Information Act.' The draft law was approved by the Cabinet in 2004 but could not be presented to Parliament due to the premature dissolution of Parliament.
- In early 2010, the Justice Ministry revised the 2004 Draft Bill and presented it to the President.
- That revised Right to Information Bill is now with the President.

Q: Where can I get information regarding the RTI Act?

A: From the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI)

96, Kirula Road, Colomb 05.

Tel: 011-5353635, Fax: 011-5335500



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 Sri Lanka Press Institute