

Right to Information Act: A Case Study on Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka's Right to Information Act (RTI Act) was enacted on 24 June 2016. The law serves as a key entry point to strengthen transparency and accountability in the government, addressing corruption and increasing trust between the state and its people. The objectives of this research were to examine whether the implementation of the RTI Act poses a threat to national security; to determine to what extent the law has acted to combat corruption; and to measure the government officials' awareness of the information law. Based on the review of literature, these areas have not been researched so far in relation to Sri Lanka. This research is based on a mixed research methodology, which comprises a combination of data analyses and interviews using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis involves RTI applications received by the Tri Forces and 200 cases of Appeal Inquiries concluded by the RTI Commission. One of the findings of this study was that the term 'national security' has not been precisely defined under the RTI Act; public authorities use different definitions of the term. Interviews and data analysis revealed that the implementation of the RTI Act does not pose a threat to national security. The enactment of the RTI Act has resulted in a considerable degree of control over corruption. It has, however, only benefitted personal interests of individuals, and it is barely used to eliminate corruption in society. There is a widespread perception in society that the public is unable to obtain maximum benefit out of the RTI Act due to lack of awareness of the Act among government officials. This study revealed that this is not entirely true as government officials are aware of the RTI Act, but they are not motivated or interested enough to implement it.

Keywords: Awareness, Corruption, National Security, RTI Act