

R. Manikkavasagar v District Land Reform Board

RTIC Appeal (In-Person Hearing 1800/2019- Order adopted as part of the formal meeting of the Commission on 11.02.2020

Order under Section 32 (1) of the Right to Information Act, No. 12 of 2016 and Record of Proceedings under Rule 28 of the Right to Information Rules of 2017 (Fees and Appeal Procedure)

Chairperson: Mr. Mahinda Gammampila
Commission Member: Ms. Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena
Commission Member: Mr. S.G. Punchihewa
Commission Member: Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran

Director General : D.G.M.V. Hapuarachchi

Appellant: R. Manikkavasagar

Notice issued to: Designated Officer, Land Reform Board

Appearance/ Represented by:
Appellant – R. Manikkavasagar
S. Gowthami (TSA)
R. Jeyaraj (TSA)
PA - U.T. Wasana Somikelum

RTI Request filed on	23.05.2019
IO responded on	No response
First Appeal to DO filed on	19.06.2019
DO responded on	No response
Appeal to RTIC filed on	24.07.2019

Brief Factual Background:

The Appellant had requested the following items of information, by an information request dated 23.05.2019:

“I lived near to Road no B71 (Hatton-Norton Highway) more than 100 years from my parents. But recently the management of Wanarajah sued against me to evict from stated land. Therefore I am requesting following information.

- *A document related to true owner of marked land (green colour) which attached herewith as P1.*
- *Can go for a legal action by the management if stated land belongs to LRC.”*

As the IO failed to respond within the time period stipulated under the Act the Appellant on 19.06.2019 lodged an appeal with the DO. As the DO too failed to respond within the time period stipulated under the Act the Appellant preferred an appeal to the Commission on 24.07.2019

Matters Arising During the Course of the Hearing:

At the time of the Appeal hearing, the Appellant informed the Commission that he wishes to know whether the particular land in question is owned by the Government or by a Private Estate (Wanarajah Estate). It was also mentioned by the Appellant that there had been a case heard at the District Court which is now a pending appeal before the Supreme Court (SC Appeal No 232/2017). Upon being queried as to his connection with the land, the Appellant submitted that he worked and lived on the said estate with leave and license of the Estate owner.

The Commission questioned the Public Authority as to whether the concerned property is a State land, however it was noted that the Public Authority was not aware of the matter.

Order:

In consideration of the facts arising from this appeal, it is ascertained that the Supreme Court has not come to a finding as to whether the property in respect of which the information has been requested is a state land or not (in judgment 232/2017 made available for the perusal of this Commission). Therefore, the Public Authority is directed to inform the Commission at its next hearing whether the property is owned by the state (State Land) or otherwise.

Next Date of Hearing: 26.05.2020

The Appeal is adjourned.

Order is conveyed to both parties in terms of Rule 27 (3) of the Commission's Rules on Fees and Appeal Procedures (Gazette No. 2004/66, 03.02.2017).
