

Human Rights Commission Sri Lanka hit by severe staff shortage

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A severe staff shortage is reported at the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), where a total of 98 posts fell vacant out of the 118 posts approved for the Commission to perform its duties, according to the Auditor General's Department.

In the report evaluating the performance of the HRCSL on fulfilling its functions, it was also revealed that in the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, investigations remained incomplete for 3,576, 5,710, 10,201, and 8,812 files, respectively, whilst two to six years were taken to resolve complaints.

Auditor General W.P.C. Wickramaratne said in the report that 21 vacancies out of 22 posts of legal officer along with all 47 posts of human rights officer remaining vacant at the Inquiry and Investigation Division of the Commission attributed to the delay in providing recommendations.

Accordingly, a cadre of 118 staff had been approved for the vacant positions to fulfil the Commission's objectives. Among them were 22 legal officers, who were to be directly involved in the investigation of complaints – a key function of the Commission – and 47 human rights officers. Furthermore, to ensure smooth functioning of the Commission, five director-level posts had also been approved.

However, 98 of these posts had fallen vacant as at 31 July 2019, due to the Commission's non-approval of a proper Scheme of Recruitment. Of the 43 executive posts approved, 35 posts, including all five approved posts of director and three posts of assistant director, remained vacant, representing 79% of the total number of posts at the executive grade.

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