

Alleged child molester a lawyer not judge: JSC Secretary

By Susitha R. Fernando

Dismissing the allegation that a judicial officer was involved in the alleged child abuse incident in Galle, Secretary of the Judicial Service Commission yesterday said the suspect was not a judge but a lawyer.

JSC Secretary Prasantha de Silva told the Daily Mirror that the alleged suspect arrested by the National Childcare Protection Authority (NCPA) over an alleged continuous sexual abuse of a 13-year-old girl for nearly one year was an Attorney-at-Law who belonged to a private bar.

"Some of the media reported that the suspect in the alleged incident was Additional Magistrate Matara which was not correct," the JSC Secretary said. "This had created much embarrassment to the present Additional Magistrate Matara who had no involvement in the alleged incident," he added.

However the suspect was a Justice of the Peace and Unofficial Magistrate (JPUM), a post awarded by the Justice Ministry. The post of Unofficial Magistrate is given to senior lawyers in the private bar to carry out some functions such as conducting identification parades on the discretion of the Magistrate.

According to reports, the suspect had not participated in any duties of an unofficial magistrate for a long time even though a board had been displayed in front of his house with the said post. "This is done to attract the clients," the JSC Secretary said.

The NCPA had arrested the suspect following a detailed revelation by the underaged victim who had allegedly been subjected to the cruelty of the 64-year-old suspect for a period of nearly one year. According to the reports of the NCPA the victim, a Tamil girl from a poor labour family had been first abused in 2007 at a bungalow in Batadolawatta tea estate in Neluwa, Galle. At that time she had been 13-years of age.

During the harassment the suspect had allegedly beaten up the victim and even had cut her with knives. She was locked up in a room whenever he goes out of the bungalow. According to the NCPA reports, the girl's head had been shaved and she had even been harassed in front of her parents and brother. The parents had been forced to hand over the girl to the suspect after threatening the parents and torturing the father, NCPA Chairman, Jagath Wellawatte said.

According to the NCPA investigation the family had got threats from various parties during the ongoing Magisterial inquiry.

When the suspect was produced before the Galle Additional Magistrate last week, Additional Magistrate Ms. Geethani Wijesinghe ordered that a Judicial Medical Officer's report be produced on the victim who was ordered to be kept at a children's home.

The inquiry is to be taken up before the Galle Magistrate today (11).