

Blacklist Southern Highway contractors



Southern Highway under construction

Reader Aloysius Hettiarachchi, in his letter under the above caption (*'The Island'* of 28th, July) suggests that the Contractors and Sub Contractors involved in the above construction be black-listed and their names published. Considering the magnitude of the crime (of 70 bridges constructed one has already collapsed killing one person and the rest of the bridges are to be demol-

ished) this so called punitive action amounts to a big joke. Punishment must hurt or else it will encourage others, including honest people, to follow suit.

AH states that there had been a number of consultants and supervisors on the job who seem to have shirked their responsibilities. Even if lack of standards were detected during construction none would have dared to point

them out then, let alone expose more serious rackets as are normally seen in large work-sites.

AH's version that the balance bridges will be demolished and new ones constructed in their place, if true, will only open the gates for even more corrupt activities if the controlling and supervisory responsibilities are again neglected. In such a reconstruction/replacement exercise, it is practically impossible even for a committed official to carry out his duties efficiently: he will face enormous difficulties and even get framed for other's misdemeanours.

Some of the usual stunts are: existing bridges will be allowed to remain after some tentative repairs and patching up and passed off as newly constructed. Retrieved materials from the broken bridges will be reused, but accounted for as new purchases - quite an easy ruse when discarded things are disposed of haphazardly. These are time-tested methods that many of us would have seen in the de-centralising of CTB Bus Depots, or the closing down of tea factories in favour of cluster factories and other minor moving operations from time to time.

The present 'discovery' is so disgusting that one would even wish there were no Highway at all. In fact, if that passer by did not die under a collapsing bridge, this racket would never have come to light.

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