



LANKA REALTY INVESTMENTS

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2nd February 2024

M. Shanti Kumar Esq.
President
The Hotel Association of Sri Lanka (THASL)
C/o Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
2nd Floor, No. 50 Navam Mawatha
Colombo 02
SRI LANKA.

Dear Sir,

**DAMAGE CAUSED TO SRI LANKA TOURISM BY FALSE AND IRRESPONSIBLE STATEMENTS MADE BY
HON. TIRAN ALLES MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD ON 18th
JANUARY 2024 ON THE YUKTHIYA OPERATION**

We, Lanka Realty Investments PLC, are a public listed company on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) with several prominent foreign investors.

We are a member of The Hotel Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) and operate the 'W15 Weligama' boutique hotel in Weligama, which is owned by our wholly-owned subsidiary Almond Trees (Pvt) Ltd. We also own and/or operate a collection of boutique hotels under the 'W15' brand, including 'W15 Ahangama', 'W15 Lake Gregory', 'W15 Hanthana' etc.

On or about 18th January 2024, Hon. Tiran Alles M.P., along with the Acting Inspector General of Police, held a press conference in connection with the 'Yukthiya' Operation being conducted by the Colombo Crimes Division (CCD) of the Sri Lanka Police. The recordings of the proceedings are available online and the links are attached hereto for your reference:

<https://youtu.be/1eQSv5s5KCK?si=P7WpsjLupmxv4fJU>

https://youtu.be/dq-K9kZ-MZQ?si=0p5OzmumUk_kKVWI

Certain statements made by Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. during the press conference, with reference to an incident which took place in the vicinity of our 'W15 Weligama' hotel, are of serious concern to us and also to me, personally.

The said incident took place in the early hours of 31st of December, 2023, outside the 'W15 Weligama' hotel, when it is alleged that a covert operation led by the Colombo Crimes Division (CCD) to apprehend criminals in the drug trade was being carried out. Being the height of tourist season in Sri Lanka, our hotel was fully booked with 100% foreign clientele, when certain officers in plain clothes who were in an unmarked vehicle in the area, which later transpired to be attached to the CCD, started firing gunshots in an ad hoc manner. Although these gunshots caused damage to our property, fortunately, none of our guests or employees were injured.

However, a Police Patrol unit from the Weligama Police, on witnessing gunshots being fired from an unmarked vehicle, had retaliated gunfire assuming that this was an armed gang since no communications of an operation had been received. The shootout led to the loss of a police officer's life. This incident has shocked the Nation and a special investigation unit has been appointed to investigate the same.

Although the Police had hitherto maintained that this incident had nothing to do with our 'W15 Weligama' hotel, Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. clearly insinuates otherwise in the said press conference by implicating our hotel without providing any evidence to support his spurious allegation. Furthermore, Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. has falsely and irresponsibly stated that there have been 15 instances of persons with illegal substances being apprehended during raids at the W15 premises. We wish to categorically state on record that this statement is an abominable lie. In this background, the statement by Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. that he will arrest the 'owner' of our hotel is nothing more than a thinly veiled threat, which is of profound concern to our foreign investors and must also be of concern to all members of the THASL such threats would deter foreign investment into the tourism sector in Sri Lanka as a whole.

The Weligama bay is a public beach. The Hotel cannot control any incidents that take place in a public beach/area.

Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. also refers to a meeting that I had, in my capacity as the Managing Director of Lanka Realty Investments PLC. I specifically state that I had no reason whatsoever to ask Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. to 'save the hotel' as falsely alleged by him. To the contrary, I met with Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. to demand an explanation as to why the CCD had acted in this reckless manner without any regard to the law or the safety of the public and foreign tourists, for which he is answerable as the Minister in charge of the portfolio of Public Security. I had also requested for an impartial inquiry to be conducted into this incident.

We wish to place on record that the said statements made by Hon. Tiran Alles M.P. have caused severe harm and irreparable damage to the reputation of the 'W15' hotels, and also Sri Lanka tourism as a whole. Please find annexed herewith the letter dated 1st February 2024 addressed to him in this regard.

Statements of this nature coming from a Cabinet Minister is shocking to say the least; particularly at a time when there are challenges in attracting foreign tourists to Sri Lanka and the tourism industry has voiced its concerns with the Government regarding the continuing adverse travel advisories published by many foreign countries, which continues to be heavily detrimental to the Sri Lanka hotel and tourism industry.

Under these grave circumstances, we urge The Hotel Association of Sri Lanka to take this matter up with His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka and also the Minister of Tourism, and to take necessary action to implement the necessary safeguards to ensure that such illegal 'operations' do not endanger the safety of tourists visiting our country and also to ensure that the Ministers of the Government do not make any similar false and irresponsible statements which will cause further irreparable damage to the hotel and tourism industry as a whole.

Yours faithfully,


M H Jamaldeen
Director

c.c. Ms. Amal Goonetilleke – CEO THASL
Hon. Harin Fernando M.P., Minister of Tourism