

Rs.17m payoff to seafarer's widow while 2nd Officer Lakshanti awaits justice

A mother of two received some Rs. 17 million as compensation earlier this week, after her seafarer husband was reported lost at sea and later confirmed dead, an official with the International Transport workers Federation (ITF) said yesterday.

Ordinary Seaman Benedict Perera went missing while sailing on a Malta-flagged commercial vessel on the South American shipping lane on September 19 last year. The compensation was made possible with the direct intervention of the ITF based in Colombo and Germany, the official said.

However, although the Perera family would feel their loss has been lessened with the compensation received, another female seafarer remains in the doldrums, several months after she was assaulted by her captain and is still waiting proper compensation. Bhanu Lakshanthi, Second Officer on board the Liberian-flagged 'Lak Maja', was brutally assaulted by her Pakistani captain and later hospitalised with fractures, ITF officials said.

The incident took place on October 31 last year, while heading for Australia from a Malaysian port. The Pakistani captain, Liaquat Chowdhury was later arrested by the Australian police, they said. Although the local agent met the medical expenses, it fell short of obtaining full compensation for the female officer who is now suffering from mental trauma.

Ms. Lakshanthi has now taken the matter to courts claiming compensation for loss of career and the mental trauma she is undergoing.