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சனாதிபதி அலுவலகம்
PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT



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October 09, 2013

**Secretaries of Ministries,
Chief Secretaries of Provinces,
Heads of Departments and
Heads of Corporations, Statutory Bodies and Government owned Companies**

Use of Electronic Documents and Electronic Communication for Official Use

Despite the fact that all legal requirements for using electronic documents and electronic communication (email) for official purposes have been addressed by the Electronic Transactions Act No. 19 of 2006, the acceptance and use of such documents and communications for official purposes remain at a low level in the public sector. The intent of this circular, therefore, is to clarify the legal situation with regard to the use of electronic documents and correspondence in order to promote such use for official purposes.

One of the main objectives of Electronic Transactions Act is “to facilitate electronic filling of documents with government and to promote efficient delivery of government services by means of reliable forms of electronic communications”. In order to fulfill these objectives, the following legal provisions are made under the Electronic Transactions Act.

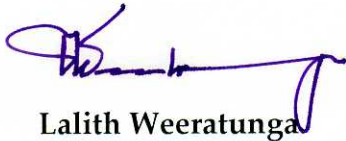
- a. Electronic data messages, electronic documents and electronic communication should not be denied their legal recognition, effect, validity and enforceability.
- b. Notwithstanding the fact that certain laws require particular documents to be in written form, such requirements can be satisfied by electronic documents, provided information in the said documents can subsequently be referred to.
- c. Where certain laws require that information be retained in original form, such requirement can be satisfied by electronic documents if their integrity is assured and the information in electronic documents can subsequently be referred to.
- d. Where certain laws make it mandatory to authenticate any information or communication by affixing the signature, such requirement can be fulfilled in electronic documents and communication by using an electronic signature for authentication.

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- e. Where any Act or enactment requires that particular information should be published in the Gazette, such requirement can be fulfilled by publishing such information in the electronic Gazette. Therefore, electronic Gazette may be used for all requirements in the public sector.

The above provisions assure that all legal requirements for using electronic documents and email for official purposes have been met. Therefore, in order to realize the objectives of e-Government and Electronic Transactions Act, I wish to instruct you to adopt the use of electronic documents and communication in your official work.

I also include herewith a white paper which has been drafted by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka on "Use of Electronic Documents and Electronic Communication for Improving the Efficiency of Government" for your information.



Lalith Weeratunga
Secretary to the President

(The Sinhala and Tamil versions of this circular are attached.)

White Paper

Use of Electronic Document and Electronic Communication for Improving the Efficiency of the Government

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this white paper is to explain how electronic documents and communication can be used in the government for improving the efficiency of the government, the eGovernment Policy requirements related to electronic documents and communication and legality of the use of such documents for carrying out the official functions of government organizations.

2. What is an electronic document?

Electronic document is a document in which information is recorded in a manner that requires a computer or other electronic device to display, interpret, and process it. This includes documents (whether text, graphics, or spread sheets) generated by a software and stored on magnetic media (disks) or optical media (CDs, DVDs), as well as electronic mail and documents transmitted in electronic data interchange.

3. Use of electronic documents in the government

Most government organizations in Sri Lanka use paper documents for carrying out their functions and normal post for communication matters. However some government organizations have adopted the use of electronic documents combined with document management systems and electronic mail.

Usually the electronic documents are generated as a result of an automated process. In some cases the necessary paper documents are digitized to be converted in to electronic documents which are subsequently to be used in the document management systems. Such electronic documents could be a record in a database, a report, permit, certificate, license or letter generated through the automated system. Such electronic documents could be in the form of pdf, text, spreadsheet, image etc.

4. The benefits of using electronic documents: Cost of Handling Paper

A survey published by www.futurelawoffice.com with regard to maintaining paper documents in a traditional organization shows that

- 70% of time of assigned staff is spent processing paper
- 90% of documents are paper
- 7.5% of documents are lost
- 15% of documents are misplaced
- 30% of documents contain obsolete information

The research carried out by Gartner Group reveals the following.

- Information is doubling every 2.5 years.
- Pages per employee is increasing at 10% per year.
- Organizations now maintain 30 times more data than in 1999.
- The number of pages consumed in governments is going up at the rate of 20% per year.
- 75% of the cost of a document is in management and logistics.
- Typical office workers spend 40% of their time looking for information.
- Professionals spend over 500 hours annually reviewing and routing files, and another 150 hours looking for incorrectly filed documents.

