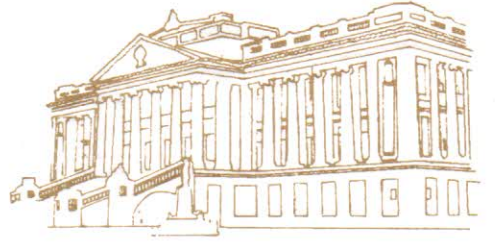




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**சனாதிபதி அலுவலகம்**  
**PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT**



Circular No: PS/GPA/Circular/33/2020

29.10.2020

Secretaries to Ministries  
 Secretaries to State Ministries  
 Chief Secretaries of Provinces  
 District Secretaries / Government Agents  
 Heads of Departments  
 Chairpersons of State Corporations / Statutory Boards / General Managers

**Remote work arrangements during the Global Coronavirus Pandemic**

01. The need for containing the prevailing wave of coronavirus spread has compelled the Government to restrict public movements particularly in the Western Province. In view of this situation, all public institutions in the Western Province and other major townships are required to adopt alternative work plans to deliver essential services and execute all other public services under remote working arrangements, using the experience gained during April – May 2020 under Work From Home (WFH) period.
02. Accordingly, Heads of all institutions are required to implement institution-specific WFH plans in accordance with the general guidelines outlined below. All line Ministry and State Ministry Secretaries and Heads of Institutions (HOI) are personally responsible and accountable to ensure steps are being taken to facilitate all activities coming under their purview to manage the pandemic effectively in the public interest.
  - a) Each HOI shall determine the type of work that can be performed remotely and the employees who will work from home and devise mechanism to deliver work material such as files as well as the necessary equipment to homes of employees on WFH with proper authorization.
  - b) Availability of employees for WFH needs to be between 8.30 am and 4.15 pm. This can be made flexible by the HOI depending on the work/service requirement unless curfew is declared.
  - c) HOI shall have the authority to re-assign the employees who are not on WFH plan to institutions or Task Forces that require additional human resources.

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- d) All HOIs shall, promote the use of alternative communication methods, such as SMS, e-mail, telephone, user friendly web applications such as WhatsApp, Skype and platforms already provided by ICTA such as 'Meet' and 'Slack'.
- e) Assistance may also be sought from Telecommunication service providers to seek call diversion facility to office telephone calls, to mobile phones of officer concerned.
- f) Every employee (including staff grade) is required to maintain a journal during the WFH period to record instructions obtained/decisions taken via modes other than letters, minutes and e-mails. Journal entries are to be considered as file minutes with proper authority from the HOI.
- g) All Chief Accounting Officers and Accounting Officers shall delegate authority as per the Financial Regulation 135 to the maximum extent possible in order to implement the WFH plan effectively.
- h) Every institution that delivers services directly to the general public is required to create an online platform (if not available already) with the assistance of their IT officers and ICTA, to entertain public requests/grievances without delay.
- i) Unless any medical evidence of proving Coronavirus symptoms has been forwarded to the institution, the persons following the guidance on self-isolation may be required by the HOD/HOI to work from home, depending on the nature of work to be delivered.
- j) Notwithstanding all the other provisions in this Circular, it shall be emphasized that no work should be carried out by an employee who has coronavirus symptoms, however mild. Wearing a mask and compliance to health requirements are mandatory at all times at work places.

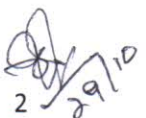
**03. The following specific guidelines will be applicable to the areas mentioned below, in addition to the general guidelines mentioned in paragraph 02 of this Circular.**

**A. Regional Administration**

- i. Considering that the majority of work executed in regional administration involve field-based activities, Head of each Department / Institution shall have the authority to re-assign those employees who normally handle office-based work, to field-based activities as and when necessary during the WFH period.

**B. Education and Higher Education**

- i. Ministry of Education shall work with the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) to have specific bandwidths for an educational TV channel and a Radio channel for

  
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school children. The Ministry is to liaise with all electronic media as well to reserve specific air times for educational programmes approved by the Ministry of Education for school children.

- ii. Universities and Training Institutions, with the assistance of ICTA, may develop 'Digital Learning Management Systems' (DLMS), and launch distance learning programmes.

#### **C. Delivering Welfare Services**

- i. Secretary to the Ministry in charge of the subject of Home Affairs in collaboration of Secretaries to the Ministries in charge of public service and finance shall devise a mechanism to deliver welfare services without any disruption during the remote work arrangements period. This includes delivering services and payment of allowances etc to senior citizens, those suffering from chronic kidney and other diseases as well as differently-abled persons as well as those placed on home quarantine to their doorstep, and providing essential needs to Homes for the elderly and children.
- ii. The Ministry of Health has issued several operational manuals, guidelines and procedures to manage public life and healthcare to all. As the Ministry of Health requires support and cooperation of entire public service, HOI's are required to extend all assistance to ensure areas coming under the purview of respective HOI's are monitored regularly to comply with health guidelines.

#### **D. Statutory Bodies and Public Enterprises**

Chairpersons and Members of the Board of Directors shall take measures to conduct their Board meetings via video conferencing methodologies. The Minutes shall be recorded in soft version and circulated by email for further action.

### **04. General Administration**

- i. Staff grade officers of all institutions, in addition to performing duties required by their respective HOIs during this period, may volunteer to assist the functioning of any other department or institution, especially in regional administration that is close to their place of residence, with proper approval from their respective HOIs. Non staff grade officers and other Government employees are also requested to assist the quarantine activities that are conducted in their respective areas of residence, to the extent possible.
- ii. Remote work arrangement periods will not be considered as public holidays. Whilst acknowledging that the key objective of this is to prevent

the coronavirus disease from developing into an epidemic in the country, all HOIs shall take appropriate steps to deliver the services that are essential to the community without delay during this period.

- iii. It is emphasized that working from home greatly assists the quarantine measures taken by the Government for the safety of the public and prevent the families of employees from getting infected.
- iv. All employees are requested to avoid mass gatherings, functions etc, and encourage their families as well as neighbours to do so.
- v. All Government servants are requested to pay special attention to children and senior citizens in their families during this calamity and have strict compliance with medical advice given from time to time.
- vi. The General Public must be kept sufficiently informed of the new service delivery arrangements and points of delivery via mass media and other communication means.
- vii. Each Head of Institution shall determine the type of work to be carried out via WFH arrangements, the specific employees to attend to such work, the frequency of employees reporting to work during the week, arrangements in place for urgent recall of employees on WFH to workplace etc. In doing so, attention may be paid to :
  - Decide which employees may work from home, which employees need to report to work and the frequency with which they are required to report to workplace during the week.
  - Consider offering work to employees who need to report to workplace in 02 separate time sessions during normal work hours in order to prevent crowding of public transport systems and workplaces.
  - Continue the use of on-line arrangements as much as possible for performance of work by employees.
  - Set daily deadlines for all routine tasks to be completed via WFH.
  - Convert all possible work to assignments with specific deadlines.
  - Require all employees who are on WFH to maintain call-up diaries as well as a record of their official work, carried out on a daily basis.

#### **05. Preventive Measures at Office**

All HOI's are required to enforce healthcare measures to ensure the prevention of COVID-19 in the workplace.

  
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- a. Ensure strict compliance with regard to social distancing, wearing of face masks, hand washing and other measures in all Government offices in the country.
- b. Maintain all workplaces in clean and sanitary condition, in particular, public spaces, countertops, workstations, lunch rooms and tea rooms, office cafeterias, toilets and other shared spaces at all times.
- c. Workplaces that have frequent visits by the general public in particular should provide access to hand washing with soap and water and/or to sanitizing hand rub dispensers placed in prominent locations in workplace premises.
- d. Display notices prominently in the workplace, both for employees and the general public, providing information on healthcare and sanitation guidelines that need to be followed.
- e. Manage workplace meetings with only essential participants in attendance, or scale down the meeting so that fewer people attend.
- f. Suspend work related travel that is non-essential. Advise employees who have to undertake essential travel to comply with prevailing regulations in the particular geographical areas.
- g. Maintain names and contact details of all employees, participants at meetings and others providing various services at the workplace.
- h. Model each work place as a "role model" for public to follow health standards.

#### **06. Plan of Return to Work Once Restrictions are Eased**

- a. Government offices in Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, and any other vulnerable locations as declared on the advice of the Director General of Health Services, shall operate initially with only a minimum number of employees reporting to work on a rotational basis. Heads of Institutions may adopt suitable criteria for selection of employees.
- b. Government offices in Districts, except Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, and any other vulnerable locations as declared on the advice of the Director General of Health Services, all other officers shall operate as normal subject to strict compliance of health requirements.
- c. Make arrangements to ensure that Government services are delivered continuously even if a certain proportion of employees is not reporting to work.

- d. Heads of Institutions may offer different categories of public services on designated dates and times to prevent high numbers of people visiting workplaces. Such mechanisms should be adequately communicated to the public via mass media and other communication methods.

**07. Special Attention**

- i. Attention is drawn to paragraph (2.J) of the President's Secretary's circular, PS/CSA/Circular/18/2020, dated 30.03.2020. Each Head of Institution is to consider suggestions made by employees on systems re-engineering (to simplify procedures) and obtain approval of Secretaries to the relevant line Ministries to implement those.
- ii. Your compliance is also sought to relevant provisions in Circular by Secretary to the President No. PS/GPA/Circular/20/2020 dated 18.04.2020 on "Guidelines to be adhered to by Government Offices during the opening of districts for resumption of normal day today activities during COVID -19" and the guidelines issued by Director General of Health Services to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community.
- iii. All HOI's are required to communicate specific guidelines to employees under their purview.

**08. Essential Services**

As port and connected services, Customs, water and electricity supply, banking etc are recognized as essential services under quarantine health regulations, the respective HOI must take appropriate measures to continue uninterrupted services subject to the compliance of health requirements.



**P.B. Jayasundera**  
Secretary to the President

Copies:      Chairperson of the Presidential Task Force on Economic Revival and Poverty Alleviation  
                 Secretary to the Cabinet of Ministers  
                 Secretary to the Prime Minister  
                 Secretaries to Independent Commissions  
                 Auditor General  
                 Head - National Operations Centre for Prevention of COVID-19