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March 19, 2020

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

Maintenance of the State Machinery without disruption during an epidemic outbreak in the country

It is the responsibility of all government, semi government and private sector organizations as well as the general public to act in a manner that will prevent the spread of coronavirus disease to an epidemic status in Sri Lanka. The government has taken all measures by now to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease in the country.

Taking into account that it the government's responsibility to provide public services continuously, and as a measure to prevent public gatherings, government ministries, departments, corporations and statutory organizations are expected to discharge their official duties remotely during the period March 20 – 27, 2020. Certain selected public services too are expected to be provided remotely in future, based on the experience gained from this instance.

This period will not be considered as public holidays, whilst only 21st and 22nd March 2020 will remain as usual government holidays.

Furthermore, relevant officials are required to take appropriate steps to ensure supply of services essential for community life such as health, local government, transport, banking, food provision, water and electricity services, as well as essential goods and services including fertilizer distribution and paddy purchasing without interruption. Similarly, functions of the District Secretariats and Divisional Secretariats are to be carried out continuously.

In implementing the remote system aforementioned, relevant organizational heads must ensure as far as possible to provide services without interruption using technology such as email, SMS and telephone and having alternative arrangements such as working on files at home, without having their staff reporting to the work place.

Since public services have to be duly provided without having the public gathering in work places, steps should be taken to provide such services and resolve any issues via methods such as telephone and email.

Where there is an additional cost incurred in the use of private telephones in these instances, necessary relief will be provided by the government.

While it is expected that all public officials will undertake appropriate strategies to provide a continuous public service during this humanitarian operation, taking into consideration that the key objective is to prevent the coronavirus disease from developing into epidemic status, and that the services provided by various organizations are different to each other, it is the responsibility of organizational heads to create awareness among the staff, limit staff engagements and implement a mechanism suitable for their own organization.

All Chambers of Commerce too have been advised that the private sector too is to conduct their business within the above framework.

P B Jayasundera

Secretary to the President

CC: Lt. General Shavendra Silva
Commander of the Army / Head of the National Operations Centre for the
Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak