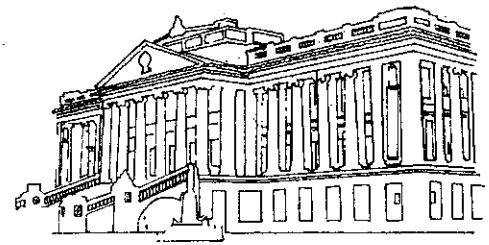




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சனாதிபதி அலுவலகம்
PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT



Circular No: PS/CSA/Circular/18/2020

30.03.2020

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

**Delivering Government Services via Work from Home Arrangements (WFH) during
the Global Coronavirus Pandemic**

01. The need for containing the coronavirus spread in Sri Lanka has compelled the Government to further restrict movements islandwide, and declare the period from 30.03.2020 to 03.04.2020 as a 'Work From Home (WFH) period. In view of this situation, the Government requires all public institutions to adopt an emergency work plan to deliver services and execute all work under remote work arrangements, using the available resources.

02. Accordingly, Heads of all institutions are required to prepare and implement institution-specific WFH plans in accordance with the general guidelines outlined below, until further notice.

- A. Each Head of Institution (HOI) shall determine the type of work that can be performed remotely and the employees who will work from home and devise a mechanism to deliver work material such as files as well as the necessary equipment to homes of employees on WFH with proper authorization. Self-generated electronic formats shall be used by every institution to record minutes and notes. Primary responsibility for the security and safety of such material and equipment lie with the respective employee who handles those at any given point of time. Ultimate responsibility lies with the HOI.
- 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.

- 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.
- D. The Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) will create a common online platform that can serve as an online resource pool. Each HOI needs to provide information on the excess human and other resources that are not part of the WFH programme, that can be re-assigned to other institutions. Those institutions with resource scarcities may obtain supplementary resources from institutions with excess resources via this platform.
- E. All HOIs shall, to the extent possible, promote the use of alternative communication methods than letters, such as e-mail, telephone, user friendly web applications such as WhatsApp, Skype and platforms already provided by ICTA such as 'Meet' and 'Slack'. IT officers of each Institution shall be the focal points to liaise with ICTA or to provide any required assistance.
- F. HOIs may contact ICTA to obtain assistance to digitize required areas of work, in order to better facilitate the WFH environment. Assistance may also be sought from Telecommunication Authorities to seek call diversion facility to office telephone calls, to mobile phones of officer concerned.
- G. 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.
- H. All Chief Accounting Officers and Accounting Officers shall delegate authority as per the Financial Regulation 135 to the maximum extent possible and encourage employees to work in small virtual groups in order to implement the WFH plan effectively.
- I. 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. Alternative methods of receiving information such as telephoning may be used as appropriate.
- J. HOIs shall direct staff officers to conceptualize an organizational system re-engineering, to revisit the institutional legislative and policy framework, functional base, strategic and action plans, organizational structure and inter and intra-divisional coordination, etc during the WFH period. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) shall be prepared to cover all activities executed as remote work, to be used as precedents.

- K. Unless any medical evidence of proving Coronavirus symptoms is 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. 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.

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 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 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 shall devise a mechanism to deliver welfare services without any disruption during the WFH period. This include delivering services and payment of allowances etc to senior citizens, those suffering from chronic kidney and other diseases as well as differently-abled persons, to their doorstep, and providing essential needs to Homes for the elderly and children.
- ii. The Ministry of Health, in consultation with the ICTA, may develop a mechanism to introduce online and call-center facilities, for services such as

psychological therapy/counselling (for anxiety and related needs), remote diagnosis (for communicable diseases), accidental care (first aid), public health advices, etc. and also a dedicated help-line for self-isolated (/self-quarantined) personnel.

D. Statutory Bodies and Public Enterprises

- i. 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.
- ii. The Government would support State Owned Enterprises with online/remote systems and mechanisms for raising revenue, through a 'Job Retention Scheme' in order to continue with the payments of salaries / wages.

04. Staff grade officers of all institutions, in addition to performing duties required by their respective HOIs during the WFH 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.

05. HOIs are required to keep a record of the performance of all employees during the WFH period. All employees who are on WFH are required to maintain a record of their official work, carried out on a daily basis, which will be taken into consideration in the evaluation of their annual performance. These records will be considered strongly during their mandatory periodic performance assessments.

06. Heads of Divisions in all Institutions are required to report the weekly progress of their work to the HOIs and they, in turn report to Secretaries to their respective Ministries on every Friday of the week. Secretaries to Ministries shall submit a comprehensive report of the weekly progress of their Ministries to the Secretary to the President on every Monday of the following week, with a copy to the Auditor General.

07. WFH periods will not be considered as public holidays, except for the holidays that have been already declared by the Government. Whilst acknowledging that the key objective of WFH is to prevent the coronavirus disease from developing into an epidemic in Sri Lanka, all HOIs shall take appropriate steps to deliver the services that are essential to the community life without delay during this period. The Government may consider providing necessary relief when an additional cost has been incurred while using private telephones to

deliver services during this period. All employees working under WFH must maintain a call up diary on a daily basis to minute their actions so that written evidence is available in case of Audit queries.

08. 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. All employees are requested to avoid mass gatherings and encourage their families as well as neighbours to do so during the WFH period. All Government servants are advised to refrain from purchasing essential goods in excessive quantities since sufficient stocks of essential food, medicine and fuel supplies are available for the country. All employees are also requested to keep their residence primarily clean and spend little time on home gardening to have some food security at home as well.

09. The Government also views the WFH period as an opportunity to take initial steps towards achieving self-sufficiency in the long run by promoting home gardening and popularizing traditional methods of cultivation. It also gives an opportunity to appreciate the joy and comforts of our home environment. Whilst urging all Government servants 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, the Government also requests that this period be utilized to enhance the knowledge, appreciation skills, and spiritual wellbeing through available means such as news and current affairs, literature, social and other media platforms.

Sgd./ P.B. Jayasundera

Secretary to the President

Copies: Chairperson of the Presidential Task Force

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