

Ministry of Public Administration
Provincial Councils and Home Affairs
Independence Square
Colombo 7
21 May 1992

- Secretaries to Ministries
- Chief Secretaries of Provinces
- Heads of Departments
- Secretaries to Governors of Provinces
- Government Agents
- Chairmen of Corporations and Statutory Boards
- Divisional Secretaries
- Heads of Local Authorities

TAKING THE ADMINISTRATION TO THE PEOPLE

The Government has decided to develop an administrative structure at the divisional level to achieve further decentralization of the functions of Government to the local level. The objectives of this new administrative system are to ensure -

- (a) that the delivery of services to the people is undertaken at the local level in direct response to the needs of the people expressed and prioritised by them through their elected Local Authorities,
- (b) that the people get their needs attended to at the level closest to where they live without having to go to a district, provincial center, or national center.
- (c) increased accountability to the people, and
- (d) providing a means at the local level for the implementation of National and Provincial Policy on matters that must concern the people.

2. As you are aware, most of the subjects and functions which have an impact on the day-to-day life of the people or where the people often have to transact business with Government, have already been devolved to the Provincial Councils under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The implementation of these devolved subjects and functions is usually effected at the level of the Divisional Secretary, who is in fact the executive arm of the Provincial Council. Chief Secretaries are constantly reviewing the working of the administrative machinery in their Province, and one of the objectives of this review is to ensure that as much as is practicable is implemented at the divisional level.

3. The Divisional Secretary now functions as the Chief Executive Official in the division of the Provincial Council. In addition, he is required to carry out certain functions which were earlier carried out by the Government Agent and which are not devolved on the Provincial Council. He will now be called upon to take on additional responsibilities and play a key role at the divisional level in performing certain agency functions in regard to subjects that are not devolved.

4. In order to fully realize the objectives set out in para 1, the Government has decided to adopt the following strategy :

- (a) Further decentralize to the divisional level all Government functions currently performed at the district level, and
- (b) decentralize to the divisional level all operational activities touching the day to day life of the people currently performed at the national level by line Ministries or Departments of Government either directly or through their representatives located at the national, provincial or district level. I enclose a statement indicating the subjects and functions where the Divisional Secretary will perform an agency function for a Ministry or Department at the center, or act under the law, where he is appointed by the Line Ministry as a Deputy Head of such Department under a specified law.

5. In order to implement the new decentralized system the Government has decided that functions currently performed by the Government Agents and functions identified from line Ministries shown at Annex - I be decentralized to the Divisional Secretariats. With the decentralization of these functions officials handling such subjects including vehicles, furniture, and equipment used for the performance of those subjects should be re deployed to the divisional level. Secretaries of all line Ministries and the Government Agents are required to implement this decision keeping to the time frame indicated in paragraph 12 below. The cadre determination for each Divisional Secretariat and work responsibilities of staff to be determined by this Ministry in consultation with the line Ministries, Provincial Councils, and the Local Authorities.

6. The Divisional Secretary who will be virtually replacing the G.A. at the district level will have to function in close collaboration and liaison with the officials of the Government, the Provincial Council, and the Local Authority.

7. Initially Divisional Secretariats would be established for the 125 Pradeshiya Sabhas for which elections were held in 1991. It is not intended to establish Divisional Secretariats for the Municipal Councils, and Urban Councils as they already have established Secretariats of their own. For the Pradeshiya sabhas in the North - East Province, Divisional Secretariats, would be established according to the improvement of the security situation in those areas.

8. In most cases the area of authority of the Pradeshiya Sabha coincides with the area of operation of existing Divisional Secretary's divisions. In some cases the two boundaries do not overlap. Chief Secretaries should report on such cases to this Ministry for action to be taken for the re-demarcation of the Divisional Secretary's divisions on the basis of existing Pradeshiya Sabhas. Where there are two Divisional Secretary's offices in a Pradeshiya Sabha division, one office would be converted to a sub-office of the Divisional Secretariat. Where there are two Pradeshiya Sabhas in one Divisional Secretary's division, two Divisional Secretariats would be established for the two Pradeshiya Sabhas.

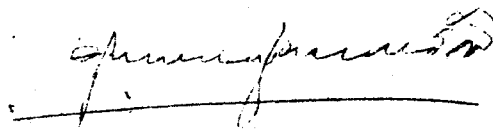
9. The ideal would be to accommodate all the component offices of the Divisional Secretariat under one roof. However it may not be possible to do so for sometime. What is of paramount importance is to locate component offices of a Divisional Secretariat in one location or within the division. The Government has therefore decided that suitable public buildings available within the division should be selected for the purpose. Where public buildings are not available suitable private buildings should be rented out. Where private buildings are also not available on rent action should be taken to put up semi permanent buildings for the time being. Chief Secretaries should secure accommodation on these lines to the Divisional Secretariats in consultation with this Ministry. In this regard Chief Secretaries are advised to study the Information Bulletin published by the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation on 'Information on Unused Government Buildings & Land in A.G.A. Divisions'.

10. Central to the implementation of the above strategy is the restructuring of the Divisional Secretariat at the divisional level and appoint a Class 1 Officer of the salary scale Rs 72,000 - 3600 x 10 - 108,000 designated as Divisional Secretary to be in charge of this office. He will be assisted by Staff Officers dealing with functions to be decentralized to this level. The Divisional Secretary would be appointed by the Government and his function and position in the division would be similar to that of the present Government Agents at the district level.

11. The decentralization of functions in the manner indicated above will result in the Kachcheri withering away, and with it the institution of Government Agent at the district level. However as the District remains the electorate for parliamentary and provincial council elections there is the need for coordination of activities at the district level. Accordingly, the District Coordinating Committee will be continued. The Government will appoint a senior public servant with a small staff to service the District Coordinating Committee.

12. It is decided to complete the implementation of the new system by 31 December 1992.

13. Please take immediate action to implement the above decisions.



M.N. Junaid
Secretary
Ministry of Public Administration
Provincial Councils and Home Affairs