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Ministry of Public Administration, Home
Affairs & Plantation Industries,
Independence Square,
Colombo 07.

27th January, 1998.

To Secretaries of Ministries,
Chief Secretaries of Provincial Council,
Government Agents,
Heads of Departments,
Secretaries to Governors,
Divisional Secretaries,
Secretaries of Provincial Public Service Commissions,
Chairman/Competent Authorities of Government
Corporation Statutory Boards
and Government Owned Companies.

**Delegation of responsibility for implementing the
Official Languages Policy**

It is declared by Article 18 Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka that Sinhala and Tamil shall be the official Languages of the Island, and according to Article 18 (4) of the Constitutional legislation necessary for giving effect to the official language policy shall be enacted by Parliament.

02. According to the Constitution every person has a right to communicate and transact business with the Government and to receive replies and other documents either in Sinhala, Tamil or English.

03. In implementing the provisions of Chapter IV of the Constitution of Sri Lanka.

the following functions are performed by the Department of Official Languages,

- (a) training of staff, providing translation facilities, and assisting the Public Service by compiling glossaries of official terms, and imparting further linguistic proficiency.
- (b) Supervision of the implementation of the Official Languages Policy.

04. The following functions are performed by the Official Languages Commission.

- (a) making recommendations on basic principles of policy regarding the use of official languages.

- (a) exercising vigilance over implementing the law relating to official languages and supervising its implementation, and
- (b) inquiring into complaints regarding non-compliance with the law relating to Official Languages, and to take remedial measures.

05. However, due to various reasons, certain obstacles have arisen in implementing the Official languages policy, and of these, main obstacles are dearth of qualified staff, and the lack of institutional machinery. Certain programmes launched earlier with the idea of increasing the staff capable of working in two languages, continue to function. The necessity of setting up organizational units in every Government Department has arisen in order to implement the legal requirements in a satisfactory manner.

06. An officer suitable for this purpose should be identified in every Ministry, Department and Provincial Council, and full responsibility for this should be delegated to him in such a manner that the progress of this programme can be monitored under the close supervision of the Head of the Institution. Heads of relevant offices, and officers who are identified as aforesaid should be designated as “ Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer ‘ and “ Official Language Implementation Officer ‘ respectively.

07. It is expected that this programme will help the implementation of the Official Language Policy smoothly.

08. The Chief Official Language Implementation Officer will be considered to have discharged his responsibilities if the Official Languages Implementation officer working under him,

- (a) possess a sound knowledge of the law relating to the Official Languages policy and connected regulations.
- (b) has evolved a frame-work for the due implementation within his Institution of the strategic plans for adhering to the provisions of the Constitution regarding the Official Languages.
- (c) has prepared a scheme containing provisions which will enable sufficient supervision of the plan.
- (d) has taken suitable remedial measures to overcome difficulties that arise hindering the due implementation of the plan, and
- (e) has, as and when necessary, rendered necessary assistance to the Commissioner of Official Languages, and the Chairman of the Official Languages commission.

09. Official Languages Implementation Officers shall, in matters pertaining to implementing the Official Languages Policy of the Government in his office, be responsible to the Chief Official Language Implementation Officer, and in particular, he shall be responsible for ensuring,

- (a) that his subordinates possess sufficient acquaintance with the law relating to the Official Language Policy.
- (b) that they have formulated strategies for ensuring that the law relating to official languages is complied with, and has enforced such strategies.
- (c) that he has formulated a suitable scheme for implementing, monitoring and evaluation.
- (d) that reports, data and information are furnished to the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Chairman of the Official Languages commission when required.

10. Therefore

The Government has decided that

- (a) Secretaries of every Ministry, Heads of Departments, Chief Secretaries of Provincial Councils, Heads of Government Corporations and Statutory Bodies shall be designated as Chief Official Languages Implementation Officers responsible for the due implementation of the Official Language Policy in their Ministries, Departments, Provincial Councils, Government Corporations and Statutory Bodies respectively.
- (b) Senior Assistant Secretaries (Administration) of every Ministry, and Deputies (Administration) in every Department, Local Body, Provincial Council, Government Corporation and Statutory Board shall be designated as Official Languages Implementation Officers in their Central and Divisional Offices.

11. All Secretaries of Ministries/Heads of Departments are required to take appropriate steps in accordance with the above decisions.

Sgd: Dixon Nilaweera
Secretary,
Ministry of Public Administration,
Home Affairs & Plantation Industries.