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State Ministry of National Security and Disaster Management

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13 May 2021

Disaster Management Circular No: 01/2021

District Secretaries

Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Hambantota, Kalutara, Kandy, Kegalle, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Rathnapura

PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR RESPONSE - SOUTH WEST MONSOON 2021

1. The third wave of COVID-19 outbreak endorsed a system of 'New Normal' with certain health guidelines, protocols and algorithms, whilst the health authorities and essential services are working round-the-clock to provide the public with protection, care and services. However, amidst the increase of the pandemic, the meteorological observations and forecast on the South-West Monsoon has predicted adverse weather Conditions during mid-May to September 2021.
2. Consequently, this will develop challenging circumstances for all District/Divisional authorities, responding agencies including Tri-Services, Police, Civil Security Department and Health Agencies; that are at the forefront of any disaster situation. This year, the usual disaster response strategies such as evacuation to shelters, food assistance, mobilisation of aid workers would be challenging and will be a major health concern due to prevailing pandemic situation. Hence, communities and responding agencies are required to plan new strategies for preparedness and response.
3. In this context, all relevant agencies must be prepared to handle such situations and adverse effects during the incoming South Western monsoon season. Focusing on this scenario, this Ministry has guided the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and National Disaster Relief Centre (NDRSC) to undertake a special process to bring in additional and proactive measures to handle any complex situation. This is to be achieved in line with the health and safety guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services in conducting relief operations amidst the COVID-19 outbreak.
4. Hence, the following specific guidelines need to be followed to cope with any given situation during the South West Monsoon and relevant District and Divisional authorities are required to make adequate preparedness action plans and coordinate with all stakeholders.
 - a. Analyse previous disaster situations during past South-West Monsoons and plan for worst case scenarios together with all relevant agencies.

- b. Based on the scenarios and high-risk areas exposed to monsoon, develop warning dissemination, evacuation and response plans with effective time slots.
 - c. Identify feasible safety centres and facilities, keeping in line with health and safety guidelines related to COVID-19 pandemic and this needs to be coordinated with health facilities, screening and registration process for each safety centre together with special safety and protection for women, children and differently abled persons.
 - d. Identify additional quarantine centres, for emergency relocation of population who are already in the process of quarantine in an emergency situation.
 - e. Promote temporary care programme for friends and relatives encouraging public to adopt the 'family and friends shelter' concept without getting clogged at safety centres.
 - f. Make effective community awareness programmes and risk communication methods through all electronic and Social Media as well as community level awareness events following health guidelines.
 - g. Plan for the needs for response and relief including food, medical, non-food, sanitary and safety materials in the safety centres with specific emphasis to provision/preparation of food and storage facilities as well as financial forecasts.
 - h. Develop a plan for the continuation of essential services such as ambulances; electricity, water, waste management, LP gas for the safety centres together with relevant agencies.
 - i. Plan for the provision of 'hot meals' (to be prepared) at a pre-arranged suitable location (avoiding community cooking) and distribution to centres with appropriate logistical arrangements.
 - j. Establish District and Divisional level disaster response coordination committees under the direction and guidance of the respective District & Divisional Secretaries for effective response/ relief planning and coordination.
 - k. Organise Health protocols to all Safety Centres/Evacuation Centres with medical authorities/PHIs and Para Medics/Red Cross.
 - l. Gather information on 'human and equipment resources' available at local levels and make appropriate tasks for local resources with specific responsible agency (political/local government/public/social).
5. All Assistant Directors (ADs) of DMC and District Officers (DOs) of National Disaster Relief Services Centre (NDRSC) to work together in one platform in order to provide best possible safety, security, response and recovery to all vulnerable communities and affected people with proper accountability without duplication.

6. This Ministry expects the highest coordination and cooperation for this response plan by all District Secretaries (GAs), Assistant Government Agents (AGAs) together with Assistant Directors (ADs) of DMC and District Officers (DOs) of NDRSC of the Ministry.

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General Kamal Gunaratne (Retd)

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State Ministry of National Security and Disaster Management

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