

Ministry of Public Administration  
Provincial Councils & Home Affairs,  
Independence Square,  
Colombo 07.

24 May, 1990.

To: All Secretaries of Ministries,  
Chief Secretaries to the Provincial Councils  
Secretaries to the Governors,  
Heads of Departments,  
Government Agents and Chairmen of Corporations.

### **Adoption of the Reformed Tamil Alphabets**

The Cabinet of Ministers having considered the Cabinet Memorandum of 23.11.1989, on the reformation in Tamil Alphabets submitted by the Hon. Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs and Information, as initiated by the Hon. Minister of State for Hindu Religious & Cultural Affairs approved the recommendations in the memorandum for adoption in Sri Lanka.

A language should have a uniform pattern of Alphabets used in writing. In Tamil Language there are 247 letters, out of this 13 letters follow an arbitrary pattern in the formation of their long and diphthongal forms. To rectify this asymmetry a proposal was put forward to modify these 13 letters in order to avoid confusion in writing. These modifications will in no way adversely affect the phonology or the orthography of the language, since only the form of the letters concerned will be changed. On the contrary the proposed modifications in the 13 letters will facilitate the learner of Tamil Language. These modifications serve to attain greater symmetry in the way Tamil letters are written. Every language in the world has had its own alphabetical changes in the process of its systematic development. Tamil Nadu in India started adopting these reformative changes as far back as 1978. Following India, Malaysia and Singapore have adopted the modified alphabets.

In order to keep pace with the trend it is incumbent that we accommodate these reforms. Moreover in the context of a changing world, accelerated thrust of technological advancement demands the scripts to be reformed to suit the word processing equipment with key-boards such as type-writers, printers, terminals, computers, etc.

Therefore as per recommendation you are requested to adopt the following instructions in implementing the modification of Tamil alphabets in Departmental and Educational activities as well as in Mass media:-

1. All Government Departments, Corporations, Boards, Public Agencies, Local Government Institutions, Associations and other Organizations under the Government shall hence forth use the modified letters in their sign boards, notice boards etc., and when corresponding with the Public and between Government Agencies in the Tamil Language. This is not difficult as all the typewriters have the notations to adopt these modifications.

2.
  - i. As far as Education is concerned new letters shall be introduced to the children in every class forthwith.
  - ii. Books printed in old letters may be used while drawing the students' attention to the modifications in the 13 letters.
  - iii. Students should be encouraged to use the modified letters for writing purposes.
  - iv. In the printing of books as well as in the reprint of text books, modified letter shall be used.
  - v. While encouraging the use of the modified letters, they should not be penalized in any manner for using the old letters for a period of 3 years after which the position will be reviewed.
3. The Government recommends that Publishers, Printers of Tamil books, Magazines and New Papers adopt the modified Tamil letter accepted by the Cabinet.
4. Telecasts should incorporate the modifications mentioned above.

For further details see Annexations I & II. Annex I shows the particular 13 letters with their corresponding modifications and Annex II indicates the traditional alphabetical forms with the altered 13 letters encircled.

Dr. P.A.T. Gunasinghe,  
Secretary,  
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