

16.5 WORKING WEEK, FLEXITIME, WORKERS ON SHIFT/ROSTER/STAGGERED HOURS AND OVERTIME

- 16.5.1 The main provisions governing the standard working week as well as the normal hours of attendance currently in force in the Public Sector; the flexible hours of attendance; and flexitime are, *inter alia*, dealt with in this Chapter. In addition, the pattern of working time for workers on shift, roster and staggered hours, overtime and other provisions governing hours of attendance are highlighted herein. In a bid to provide for a longer office coverage and combat tardiness in the Public Sector, we are also enhancing the provisions of the flexible hours of attendance and the flexible working arrangement scheme.

Working Week

- 16.5.2 An employee is required to operate on either a five-day week or a six-day week basis depending on the operational needs of the organisation. The specified number of hours per week prescribed for the different group of employees varies from 33¾ to 40 hours except for *Surveillant formerly Security Guard* who is required to put in 60 hours.
- 16.5.3 The existing provisions governing the standard working week for the Public Sector employees are as enumerated in the table below:

Group of Employees	Number of Hours per week
Workmen's Group and other manual grades	40 hours
<i>Surveillant formerly Security Guard</i>	60 hours
Employees working on shift	40 hours or a multiple of 40 hours, where the shift covers a cycle.
Employees working on roster and at staggered hours	Not less than 33¾ hours and not more than 40 hours as specified by Responsible Officers
Employees belonging to Disciplined Forces	As specified by Responsible Officers
All other officers	Between 33¾ hours and 40 hours as specified by the Responsible Officer

- 16.5.4 Any employee may be required to operate on a six-day week basis provided the normal working week is in accordance with provisions as specified in the table above.
- 16.5.5 Shift workers may be required to work on roster or at staggered hours, if the exigencies of the service so require.
- 16.5.6 For this review, no proposal has been made on the working hours of employees of the Public Sector. It is worth highlighting that the agreed hours of work in Public Sector Organisations differ from country to country. While in New Zealand, the total normal hours of work of an employee is up to a maximum of 40 hours weekly, in Singapore the contractual hours of work are up to 9 hours per day or 44 hours weekly and in South Africa, it varies from 40 hours a week with a statutory limitation of 45 hours per week. In comparison to what is obtainable in foreign jurisdiction, the Bureau considers that the present provisions on the standard working week are appropriate and require no amendment.

Recommendation 1

- 16.5.7 We recommend that the existing provisions governing the Standard Working Week in the Public Sector, as specified at paragraphs 16.5.3 to 16.5.5 above, should continue to prevail.**

Hours of Attendance for Public Sector Employees

- 16.5.8 Hours of work are an essential element in determining the terms and conditions of public sector employees. As highlighted earlier, the established pattern of work for full-time employees varies from 33¾ hours to 40 hours weekly except for the grade of *Surveillant formerly Security Guard*, which is invariably required to put in 60 hours weekly. The Responsible Officers of Ministries/Departments/Organisations are vested with the authority for setting the commencing and finishing time of work of officers working under their supervision, within the specified hours taking into account the operational needs of their organisations.
- 16.5.9 The normal hours of attendance for full-time employees other than those working on shift, roster and at staggered hours as well as for those working in essential services providing a 24-hour coverage are as spelt out hereunder:

Category	Days of Work	Duration
Officers working on a five-day week basis	Monday to Friday	0845 to 1600 hours (half hour for lunch)
Officers working on a six-day week basis	Monday to Friday	0900 to 1530 hours (half hour for lunch)
	Saturday	0900 hours to noon
Officers in the Workmen's Group and other manual grades putting in 40 hours weekly	Monday to Friday	0700 to 1515 hours (one hour for lunch)
	Saturday	0700 to 1045 hours

16.5.10 As the above provision is adequate, we are upholding same.

Recommendation 2

16.5.11 We recommend that Responsible Officers of Ministries/Departments/Organisations should continue to specify the working hours of officers working under their supervision taking into consideration the operational needs of their organisations.

Flexible Hours of Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangement

16.5.12 With a view to combatting tardiness in the Public Sector and based on findings of its previous surveys, the Bureau introduced the concept of flexible hours of attendance in its 2003 Report. The said pattern of attendance had proved to be an effective system to induce desired employee behaviour.

16.5.13 The Bureau, in its successive Reports, has also been advocating for the introduction of Flexitime in the Public Service subject to demand and proper consultations with the staff side; availability of resources; and approval of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR). The main aim of this system is to allow employees to choose their individual working and finishing time subject to putting in the total hours required weekly. Such a system is viewed to be beneficial for both the employer and employee.

16.5.14 Since October 2015, the MPSAIR has implemented the Flexible Working Arrangement and spearheaded its introduction on a pilot basis in some 22 Ministries/Departments for officers working on a five-day week basis, excluding employees on shift and roster, officers of the Disciplined Forces and Educational Sector. The Ministry proposed a bandwidth ranging between 0800 hours to 1700 hours with the core hours being from 0945 hours to 1515 hours. The time slots were as follows:

(i) Officers other than Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary

Slot 1	0800 hours to 1515 hours
Slot 2	0845 hours to 1600 hours
Slot 3	0900 hours to 1615 hours
Slot 4	0945 hours to 1700 hours

(ii) Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary

Slot 1	0730 hours to 1600 hours
Slot 2	0800 hours to 1630 hours
Slot 3	0830 hours to 1700 hours

Stakeholders Submission

- 16.5.15 During consultations, stakeholders expressed that recommendations made in the 2016 PRB Report concerning Flexible Hours of Attendance are implemented on a piecemeal basis. They added that as the onus rests with the Responsible Officers, same was not implemented in a uniform manner.
- 16.5.16 Federations and Unions emphasised that the Flexible Working Arrangement Scheme proposed by the MPSAIR was not in line with the recommendations of the 2016 PRB Report as it created two categories of public officers in the Public Sector and parties concerned were not consulted prior to its implementation. They further averred that the proposals of the MPSAIR were more stringent and restrictive; the conditions of service of public officers have been worsened off; employees were unduly penalised for attending duty late in the morning and time-off/early departures were not offset against excess hours accumulated in bank; and the scheme which was introduced on a pilot basis, was different to what they opted for in the 2016 PRB Report.

MPSAIR Submission

- 16.5.17 In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and in consonance with Government's strategy for a phased resumption of economic and other activities in the Public Sector, the Flexible Working Arrangement Scheme was extended in other Ministries/Departments/Organisations. A Circular Letter dated 04 May 2020 was, therefore, issued by the MPSAIR informing Ministries and Departments that flexitime should be introduced thereby mitigating the pressure on public transport and allowing public officers adopt social distancing measures. The arrival and departure time of employees were segregated in four slots except for incumbents in the Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary Cadre where three slots were provided.
- 16.5.18 The MPSAIR has submitted that the feasibility of this Scheme had to be re-assessed following complaints from various stakeholders. Against this backdrop, a survey was carried out in organisations where the pilot testing of the Flexible Working Arrangement Scheme was implemented. One of the main observations of the Ministry was that the implementation of the two schemes namely, Flexible Hours of Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangement, was giving rise to resistance and dissatisfaction.
- 16.5.19 The main proposals of the MPSAIR, in the context of this review exercise, pertain to: maintaining the flexible working hours with a bandwidth ranging between 0815 hours to 1700 hours and the core working hours to be from 0945 hours to 1530 hours while for officers other than those belonging to the Workmen's Group, the slots be varied as follows: 0815 hours to 1530 hours; 0845 hours to 1600 hours; 0915 hours to 1630 hours; and 0945 hours to 1700 hours. They also proposed three slots for employees in the Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary Cadre viz 0730 hours to 1600 hours; 0800 hours to 1630 hours and 0830 hours to 1700 hours.

16.5.20 The MPSAIR has also canvassed that:

- a non-cumulative bank system with an approved ceiling of 3 ½ hours per month be introduced which will lapse at the end of the month;
- time-off not exceeding one half-day per month be granted, provided the hours of lateness have already been offset against the balance of early arrivals/late departures;
- late arrivals up to a maximum of 30 minutes in the first and second time slots not to be considered as lateness;
- a tolerance margin of 15 minutes with respect to arrival and departure time for the four slots for officers other than Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary Cadre be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service;
- officers not to be allowed to work for more than 30 minutes after the departure time of the slot chosen to reimburse late arrivals, except for senior officers who are neither eligible for overtime nor for extra duty allowance in lieu of overtime;
- persistent lateness of more than 30 minutes, absences during working time without authorisation and excess time taken for lunch to be deducted from leave entitlement; and
- Regulation 42(1) (c) of the Public Service Commission Regulations to be applied in case of regular defaulters; and late arrivals for reasons beyond individual control, such as heavy rainfall, major road accidents, unusual traffic jam, not to be considered as lateness, subject to the approval of the Supervising Officer.

Survey

16.5.21 The Bureau conducted a survey in the Public Sector to identify any practical difficulty and gauge the extent to which its recommendations are implementable regarding Flexible Hours of Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangement. The objectives of the survey were geared towards, providing remedial solutions to improve the attendance pattern of public officers for enhanced service delivery. It was issued on 10 February 2020 with the closing date for submission being 10 March 2020 which was, however, extended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Despite the additional time granted, the response rate for the Civil Service was 64.44% including RRA; 63.16% for Parastatal Bodies and 50% for Local Authorities.

Findings of Survey

16.5.22 The survey has revealed that: the use of electronic attendance system has been adopted by 81% of organisations; 86% of organisations operate on a five-day week basis, while 9% operate on a six-day week basis and 5% operate on both five-day and six-day week basis; records of late/early arrivals were kept and monitored by 86% of the organisations; and there was no evidence on the part of organisations surveyed as to whether Flexible Working Arrangement was effectively inducing desired employee behaviour.

16.5.23 The survey findings also revealed that most of the employees preferred the slot 0845–1600 hours under the Flexible Working Arrangement Scheme; the current provisions of Flexible Working Arrangement were considered to be stringent while those of the flexible hours of attendance were considered more favourable. Further, the majority of organisations were not in favour of rescheduling the opening hours of public offices in a staggered way on account of transport problems and security issues, amongst others.

Observations

16.5.24 All the representations have been examined by the Bureau. In line with the findings of the survey and considering the global incidence of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the major national developmental projects under way and the acute road congestion problem, the Bureau is of the view that both the Flexible Working Arrangement and the Flexible Hours of Attendance need to be harmonised.

16.5.25 We are, while upholding certain existing provisions, standardising/enhancing the provisions governing Flexible Hours of Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangement.

Recommendation 3

16.5.26 We recommend that, subject to the operational needs of the organisation, Responsible Officers of Ministries/Departments/Organisations should consider the advisability of implementing:

EITHER

(i) the Flexible Hours of Attendance as follows:

- (a) for officers operating on a five-day week basis (except for Supervising Officers in charge of Ministries and Heads of Ministries/Departments/Divisions, Officers of the Disciplined Forces, Educational Sector and employees working on shift, roster and staggered hours); and**
- (b) for officers operating on a six-day week basis (except for Supervising Officers in charge of Ministries and Heads of Ministries/Departments/Divisions, Officers of the Disciplined Forces, Educational Sector and employees working on shift, roster and at staggered hours).**

Flexible Hours of Attendance	
Officers operating on a five-day week basis	
Working Hours	Remarks
8.45 a.m -4.00 p.m (Core hours: 9.15 a.m to 3.45 p.m, with half an hour for lunch)	<p>Early arrival from 8.30 a.m up to 8.45 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 8.45 am up to 9.15 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 9.15 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/ Supervising Officer by working up to 4.30 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 3.45 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
Officers operating on six-day week basis	
Working Hours	Remarks
<p>Weekdays: 9.00 a.m -3.30 p.m (Core hours: 9.30 a.m to 3.15 p.m, with half an hour for lunch)</p> <p>Saturday: 9.00 a.m – Noon</p>	<p>Early arrival from 8.45 a.m up to 9.00 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 9.00 am up to 9.30 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 9.30 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/ Supervising Officer by working up to 4.00 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 3.15 p.m on week days and 11.45 a.m on Saturdays would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>

OR

- (ii) the Flexible Working Arrangement for officers operating on a five-day week basis (except for Supervising Officers in charge of Ministries and Heads of Ministries/Departments/Divisions, Officers of the Disciplined Forces, Educational Sector and employees working on shift, roster and staggered hours). A bandwidth ranging between 8.15 a.m to 5.00 p.m with the core working hours being 9.45 a.m to 3.30 p.m, and the time slots are detailed in the table below:

Flexible Working Arrangement		
Officers other than employees of the Office Auxiliary Cadre		
Slot	Working Hours	Remarks
1.	8.15 a.m to 3.30 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 8.00 a.m up to 8.15 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 8.15 a.m up to 8.45 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p>

Flexible Working Arrangement		
		<p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 8.45 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/ Supervising Officer by working up to 4.00 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 3.15 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
2.	8.45 a.m to 4.00 p.m.	<p>Early arrival from 8.30 a.m up to 8.45 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 8.45 am up to 9.15 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 9.15 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/ Supervising Officer by working up to 4.30 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 3.45 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
3.	9.15 a.m to 4.30 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 9.00 a.m up to 9.15 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 9.15 a.m up to 9.45 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 9.45 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/Supervising Officer by working up to 5.00 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 4.15 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
4.	9.45a.m to 5.00 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 9.30 a.m up to 9.45 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Departure time as from 4.45 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
Office Auxiliary Cadre		
1.	7.30 a.m to 4.00 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 7.15 a.m up to 7.30 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 7.30 am up to 8.00 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 8.00 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/Supervising Officer by working up to 4.30 p.m.</p>

Flexible Working Arrangement		
		Departure time as from 3.45 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.
2.	8.00 a.m to 4.30 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 7.45 a.m up to 8.00 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Arrival time between 8.00 am up to 8.30 a.m should not be considered as lateness provided the standard working week is adhered to.</p> <p>Late arrivals and lateness that is, arrival after 8.30 a.m may be reimbursed subject to the approval of the Responsible/Supervising Officer by working up to 5.00 p.m.</p> <p>Departure time as from 4.15 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>
3.	8.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m	<p>Early arrival from 8.15 a.m up to 8.30 a.m be accumulated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Departure time as from 4.45 p.m would be allowed, subject to exigencies of the service.</p>

16.5.27 We also recommend that:

- (i) the option for a time slot should be made in consultation with the Head of Section and approved by the Responsible/Supervising Officer; and
- (ii) Responsible/Supervising Officers should at their discretion, and subject to being satisfied with the genuineness of a request, allow for change in time slot opted by an employee.

16.5.28 We further recommend that Organisations implementing the Flexible Hours of Attendance and the Flexible Working Arrangement should:

- (i) ensure that there is adequate office coverage during official hours (that is maintain core hours) so that customer service is not affected by the pattern of work attendance. Employees may work beyond the official hours if required by Management, subject to exigencies of the service;
- (ii) keep an account of late/early arrivals in respect of each officer on a daily basis in an Excess hours of attendance bank;
- (iii) allow the officers to accumulate early arrivals, not exceeding 15 minutes per day in the Excess hours of attendance bank on a monthly basis which will lapse automatically, if not availed of, after a period of three months.
- (iv) deduct, in the first instance, late arrivals from the Excess hours of attendance bank on a monthly basis. If the officer does not have any excess accumulated hours in bank, late arrivals should be deducted from either the officers' vacation leave entitlement or casual leave entitlement. The option to deduct late arrivals from either vacation or casual leave

entitlements should be exercised by officers at the beginning of each calendar year and is irrevocable; and

- (v) ensure that late arrivals are reimbursed within the same month, failing which same will be considered as lateness.

16.5.29 Other provisions governing Flexible Hours of Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangement should be as follows:

- A. Officers may be granted a maximum of 3½ hours per month against the corresponding excess hours accumulated in the Excess hours of attendance bank, subject to exigencies of the service, provided that the hours of lateness, if any, have already been offset.
- B. Officers who opt to attend work more than the normal contractual weekly hours of work listed at paragraph 16.5.3, shall not be eligible for overtime, but shall be governed by the provisions as at paragraph E below.
- C. Lateness cannot be reimbursed by provisions other than those specified at paragraph 16.5.26, except for senior officers who are neither eligible for overtime nor for extra duty allowance in lieu of overtime.
- D. (i) Persistent lateness and absences without authorisation during working time and excess time taken for lunch should be deducted from vacation leave entitlement or casual leave entitlement as opted by the officer at the beginning of each year. Regulation 42(1) (c) of the PSC Regulations should be applied in case of regular defaulters/habitual late comers.
 - (a) attend work regularly 30 minutes after the scheduled arrival time; and
 - (b) have opted for a particular time slot in the flexible pattern of work and attend work regularly at hours classified as lateness therein;for at least five days per month over a period of three consecutive months.
- (ii) Lateness for reasons beyond individual control, for example, heavy rainfall, major road accidents, unusual traffic jam, etc., officially reported to a Supervising Officer where several officers are involved, may not be considered as lateness for that day, subject to his approval.

- (iv) For officers not eligible for overtime payment and extra duty allowance and who are required to work regularly beyond 4.00 p.m., (on five-day week basis) and beyond 3.30 p.m. (on six-day week basis), attendance after 9.15 a.m. (on five-day week basis) and 9.30 a.m. (on six-day week basis) should not be considered as lateness, subject to the approval of the Responsible/Supervising Officer under the Flexible Hours of Attendance. This provision is also applicable to: officers who have opted for the time slots under the Flexible Working Arrangement; and officers who have been granted permission for homeworking based on completion of allocated assignments.
- E. The normal contractual weekly hours of work should remain unchanged. Officers working on a five-day week basis, that is, 8.45 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. (half an hour for lunch) and officers working on a six-day week basis, that is, 9.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. (half an hour for lunch) should be allowed to maintain the present pattern. This provision should also apply to officers mentioned at sub-paragraph B above.
- F. For officers required to provide a 24-hour service in the Health Sector, whether on shift or not, the normal attendance hours in force as at the eve of the publication of the 2021 Report, are maintained. Management shall continue to be responsible for the working hours of officers in the Health Sector.
- G. Management shall continue to be responsible for establishing the working hours of the teaching profession.
- H. Notwithstanding the above provisions, where flexible pattern of attendance is not feasible particularly on sites outside the capital, Management may continue to operate on the system prevailing prior to *01 January 2021*, subject to the approval of the Responsible/Supervising Officer. In such cases, lateness and absences during working time without authorisation would be deducted either from the officers' vacation leave entitlement or casual leave entitlement as opted by the officer at the beginning of each year. However, in case there is no improvement in the officer's record of late attendance and the excess time taken for lunch, the Responsible Officer may then initiate action, under Regulation 42(1)(c) of the PSC Regulations, for the duration of lateness to be deducted from the officer's salary.
- I. Officers working on shift, roster and at staggered hours should continue to work within the prescribed time. Period of late attendance, excess time taken for lunch and absences from offices without authorisation should be deducted from either the officers' vacation leave entitlement or casual leave entitlement opted by the officer at the beginning of each year. All cases of persistent lateness should be dealt with in accordance with Regulation 42(1)(c) of the PSC Regulations.

- J. The provisions of Flexible Pattern of Attendance are not applicable to the Workmen's Group (except for employees of the Office Auxiliary Cadre who are eligible for the Flexible Working Arrangement) and officers falling in this category should work within the prescribed hours. The Human Resource Section of Ministries/Department should devise a mechanism to monitor the Pattern of Attendance for the Workmen's Group posted at different sites of work. Lateness, in occasional cases, for employees belonging to the Workmen's Group, should be offset against early arrival while cases of persistent lateness should be dealt with in accordance with provision of sub-paragraph D above.**
- K. With a view to ensuring a close monitoring of the time of arrival and departure, as well as absence from office during office hours, Ministries/Departments/Organisations should expedite matters for the introduction of electronic attendance system wherever same has not been put in place so far.**
- L. The onus for deciding whether Flexible Pattern of Attendance would be applicable for officers working at staggered hours rests upon the Responsible/Supervising Officer.**

Homeworking

16.5.30 In accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Home Work convention, '*home work*' means work carried out by a person in his/her home or in other premises of his/her choice, other than the workplace of the employer. The Bureau, in its 2008 Report, introduced the modern concept of work from home such that Chief Executives of Ministries/Departments/Organisations may allow officers particularly at professional level and above to work from home where demand exists and resources permit for assignments that are project-based with verifiable performance indicators and for which there can be no disagreement on what is needed for the target to be achieved.

Foreign Jurisdiction

16.5.31 Based on the ILO 'Employers' guide on working from home', the COVID-19 Pandemic has severely affected public health and caused unprecedented disruptions to economies and labour markets. Government throughout the world have taken measures to address the spread of the Corona Virus and around 68% of the world's total workforce, including 81% of employers, have been subject to workplace closures.

16.5.32 As the crisis continues to evolve, public administrations are enacting immediate measures to help public officials perform as effectively as possible. Globally, they have transitioned rapidly to home-based work or Work from Home (WFH). This switch poses new challenges and novel constraints for millions of public officials across the globe, some of whom are working to fight the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic while others are continuing the normal work of government.

- 16.5.33 Other alternative modes of working pattern and concepts such as Skeleton Workforce, Staggered Working Hours and Four-day (compressed) Workweek are being explored by organisations to ensure Business Continuity.
- 16.5.34 A compressed workweek involves working hours being scheduled over fewer than normal working days, resulting in longer working days each week. The compressed workweek system usually extends the working day to beyond eight hours or daily prescribed hours, but reduces the number of consecutive days worked to less than five.
- 16.5.35 Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, certain countries have adopted compressed workweek as follows: Monday to Thursday, Tuesday to Friday, Monday to Tuesday and Thursday to Friday or a combination of the four-day workdays to ensure that there are employees reporting the whole week.

Work From Home in the Public Service

- 16.5.36 In Mauritius, Government implemented various degrees of stay-at-home orders and one of the most immediate challenges public officers faced was the inability to conduct business in person or on site. This compelled the MPSAIR to innovate and introduce new ways of working. Hence, it introduced a WFH Scheme, on a pilot basis, on 09 May 2020 as a crisis response measure with the intent of providing structural support to public administrations to ensure Business Continuity. The purpose was also to set aside traditional ways of collaborating and interacting within the Government, or with citizens and businesses.
- 16.5.37 In this context, a Work from Home Protocol has been developed by the UNDP Consultant, Price Waterhouse Coopers Limited, which aims to support the Government by laying the foundation for an enhanced public sector productivity by not only strengthening the public administration of today but also building resilience for tomorrow. During a WFH arrangement, the policies of the Government including the terms and conditions of employment as well as policies relating to safety and health, data protection and security are still applicable. According to Circular No. 32 of 2020 issued by the MPSAIR, all officers working from home are provided with appropriate IT equipment and granted a monthly cellphone and internet allowance. Besides, Ministries and Departments should consider procuring laptops with appropriate software and other equipment required in lieu of desktop PCs to enable the transition in a phased manner. Furthermore, since March 2021, the MPSAIR has, in line with the Sandbox Framework, put in place an online portal to encourage submission of proposals from Ministries/Departments as well as to facilitate the adoption of innovative technologies in the Public Service.
- 16.5.38 To oversee the effective implementation of the Work From Home across the Public Sector, a Steering Committee has been set up at the level of the MPSAIR under the Chairmanship of the Secretary for Public Service. Additionally, with a view to enabling Ministries/Departments to adapt to the "new normal" and to leverage on innovative technologies to ensure Business Continuity of Government services, the MPSAIR has, in collaboration, with the Civil Service College, Mauritius started the

training of Senior Officers on "Business Continuity Management" so as to equip them with the necessary tools and techniques to be able to undertake strategic business resilience in the event of any calamity/hazard.

Survey

16.5.39 The Work from Home Scheme has become part of the "new normal" working culture required to ensure resilience and Business Continuity in the Public Service. For this Report, the Bureau has conducted a survey to gauge the effectiveness of the Scheme. The survey was rolled out on 14 December 2020 with the closing date set for 15 January 2021. The response rate has been 65.56% for the Civil Service including RRA; 42.11% for organisations classified as Parastatal Organisations and 83.33% for the Local Authorities.

Survey Findings

16.5.40 Out of 123 public sector organisations that have responded to the survey, 23 submitted a nil reply. The main findings of the survey are as follows:

- Some 26.3% are providing essential services, while 73.7% are classified as organisations not providing essential services.
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic, 73% of organisations classified as non-essential services, have resorted to home working.
- The 27% of organisations that could not adopt work from home are those providing essential services and requiring physical presence of employees.
- Some 21% of organisations have not submitted their views on whether they were willing to implement WFH as compared to 48% of organisations willing to adopt the concept and 31% not willing to do so.
- The reasons advanced by those not willing to adopt WFH concept were *inter-alia*, physical presence of officers required on site of work; need for face-to-face interactions for the delivery of services; no proper mechanism to gauge officer's performance; no access to office software; and confidentiality of data.

16.5.41 The survey has also revealed the following:

- During the COVID-19 Pandemic, some officers of the Administrative Cadre, Technical Cadres and the General Services grades have been involved in home working for specific duties such as, issuing circulars, processing of Work Access Permits, preparation of regulations, preparation of budget, issue of important information/instruction emanating from Government and ensuring continuity of service delivery. Further, the concept of WFH could not be made applicable for employees in the Workmen's Group.
- To ensure proper interaction among staff, the means of communication adopted by organisations which have implemented WFH were mostly through telephone, email and social media platform and monitoring of work by immediate supervisors.

- The benefits of WFH concept according to various organisations are, amongst others, ensuring continuity of service, saving in utility at organisational level, prevention of cross contamination in case of pandemic, flexibility in work organisation, saving in travelling cost and time and improved work-life balance. However, a few organisations have expressed their concern in monitoring the work of subordinates, monitoring confidentiality and safety of information/data, and privacy of social life and health hazards.
- As a means to consolidating the concept of WFH, other organisations suggested that there should be an established framework with all facilities such as appropriate training, communication facilities and utilities, implementation of a good system of performance monitoring, refund of cost borne by employees and rewarding employees performing well through WFH.

16.5.42 The Bureau considers that the concept of WFH has now become an integral part of the “new normal”. Further, with a view to ensuring Business Continuity in case of similar occurrences as the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Bureau while upholding the Work From Home Protocol of the MPSAIR, is making appropriate recommendations.

Recommendation 4

16.5.43 We recommend that, except for essential services, Responsible/Supervising Officers:

- (a) should, as part of their Business Continuity Plan in case of *force majeure*, make appropriate arrangements for the implementation of the Work From Home Protocol as per MPSAIR’s Circular Letter No. 14 of 2021, at the level of their Ministry/Department and Local Authorities/Parastatal Bodies/State Owned Enterprises falling under their purview;**
- (b) may, for assignments that are project-based with verifiable performance indicators and for which there can be no disagreement on what is needed for the target to be achieved, continue to allow officers particularly at the level of professional and above to Work from Home on certain assignment where demand exists and resources permit, provided the Work From Home Protocol is adhered to;**
- (c) may, in the event of a *force majeure*, consider the advisability of adopting the concept of four-day (compressed) workweek, provided the relevant working week of 33¾ or 40 hrs is complied with as stipulated at paragraph 16.5.3 of this Chapter. The four-day workweek should be a combination of any four-day workdays while ensuring that there are employees reporting the whole workweek; and**
- (d) should consider the gradual transition from desktop PCs to laptops, acquisition of relevant software and provision of necessary tools and equipment as well as training to staff as a readiness measure to ensure Business Continuity in case of *force majeure*.**

- 16.5.44 We further recommend that the Work From Home Steering Committee set up under the *aegis* of the MPSAIR should:**
- (a) in consultation with Responsible/Supervising Officers of organisations where the Work from Home Scheme has not been implemented, identify whether same could be rolled out in their institution as part of their Business Continuity Plan and provide appropriate guidance and advice thereon; and**
 - (b) in consultation with the PRB determine/review the quantum of telephone and internet allowances that need to be paid to eligible officers in the Work from Home Scheme.**

Definitions

- 16.5.45 **Shift work** is a flexible working arrangement for a 24-hour coverage where one employee replaces another or where different group of workers do the same job one after another and whereby workers normally work 40 hours weekly, or an average of 40 hours weekly in a cycle. These workers work in relays on a 24-hour basis including invariably night duty and work on Sundays and public holidays.
- 16.5.46 **Workers operating on a roster basis** do not work on a 24-hour basis but according to a structured pattern of work specifying the starting times and finishing times of turns of duty which may or may not include night duty. **Workers operating on roster (day)** are those whose turn of duty starts either at or after 4.00 a.m. or goes up to 8.00 p.m. **Workers operating on roster (day and night)** are those whose turn of duty may start either before 4.00 a.m. or extend beyond 8.00 p.m.
- 16.5.47 **Workers categorised as working at staggered hours** work normal hours but are called upon to work, on a regular basis, at irregular hours including Saturdays and Sundays against time-off during their normal working hours. It is a way of covering a longer day.
- 16.5.48 **Night work** means work which is performed during a period of not less than seven consecutive hours, including the interval from 11.00 p.m to 5.00 a.m.

Workers on Shift, Roster and Staggered Hours

- 16.5.49 Workers on shift, roster and staggered hours are governed by special provisions regarding, *inter alia*, work on public holidays and the different forms of compensation. These workers are granted additional compensation due to their pattern of work which is considered in salary determination. Further, Sunday is considered as a normal working day for employees working on shift, roster and staggered hours unless it coincides with a proclaimed public holiday.
- 16.5.50 As these provisions are appropriate, we consider that they should continue to prevail.

Recommendation 5

- 16.5.51 We recommend that Sunday should continue to be considered as a normal working day for employees working on shift, roster and staggered hours unless it coincides with a proclaimed public holiday.**
- 16.5.52 We additionally recommend that workers operating on shift, roster and staggered hours should continue to be governed by the following provisions:**
- A. An additional day off should be given to workers on shift and workers employed on a roster basis whose day off coincides with a public holiday. Those who work on a public holiday should be granted two days off.**
 - B. Workers on shift and workers on roster who cannot be granted days off as per provision at paragraph 'A' above should be paid as follows:**
 - (i) one day's pay for a day off coinciding with a public holiday; and**
 - (ii) two days' pay for actually working a whole shift/roster on a public holiday.**
 - C. When a shift or roster covers part of a public holiday and part of a normal working day, officers working on that shift or roster should be granted:**
 - (i) no compensation for working less than one hour on a public holiday;**
 - (ii) half day off or half day's pay for working more than one hour and less than four hours on a public holiday;**
 - (iii) one day's off or one day's pay for working more than four hours and less than eight hours on a public holiday or the officer may accrue one additional day of casual leave;**
 - (iv) two days' off or two days' pay whenever they work eight hours or more on a public holiday or the officer may accrue two additional days of casual leave; and**
 - (v) a maximum of three days off or three days' pay for working for a continuous period of 24 hours spread over two consecutive public holidays or the accrual of three additional days of casual leave.**
 - D. The maximum accrual of additional casual leave should be five days which should be availed within the same year. The computation for such leave accruals is kept separate from any other form of leave.**
 - E. Days off granted for work performed on a public holiday and in respect of days off coinciding with a public holiday should be considered as approved leave for the purpose of computation of overtime.**

- F. Workers should be allowed to exchange shifts or rostered days off by mutual agreement and with the consent of their supervisors, provided that such an arrangement does not give any employee an entitlement to the payment of overtime.**
- G. The normal entitlement of sick/casual leave of all shift workers should be converted into the corresponding number of hours on the basis of one day being equal to eight hours' work. For absence on any shift, the exact number of hours the shift worker was scheduled to work should be deducted from his sick/casual leave entitlement. However, the officer may be given the option to reimburse by working additionally the number of hours in excess of the eight hours, in lieu.**
- H. Shift schedules must, as far as possible, ensure that:**
- (i) shift starts or ends at times which would be convenient to both Management and employees in the interest of the service;**
 - (ii) public transport is/would be available within a reasonable time; and**
 - (iii) unduly long shifts, without lying-in period be avoided.**
- I. For shift involving night work, the following measures must be ensured:**
- (i) two consecutive full time shifts should not be performed by the same shift workers, except in unavoidable circumstances;**
 - (ii) as far as possible, a rest period of at least 11 hours between two shifts should be guaranteed, except for disciplined forces; and**
 - (iii) employees do not permanently work on night shifts.**
- J. One day's pay in respect of workers on shift/roster/staggered hours should be equivalent to eight times the hourly rate.**

$$\text{Hourly rate} = \frac{\text{Annual salary for the financial year}}{52 \times 40}$$

Compensation for Shift Work/Roster/Staggered Hours

- 16.5.53 The compensation for workers operating on shift/roster/staggered hours has been made in their respective salary, unless otherwise specified. Management should ensure regular rotation of such categories of staff in a spirit of equity to all employees. As per existing provisions:
- (a) A night shift allowance is paid to all those shift workers who effectively perform night shift; that is, those effectively working the hours of 11.00 p.m up to 5.00 a.m.**

- (b) For shift work performed at night, incumbents are granted a pay supplement.
- (c) Night shift workers are eligible for the following special provisions:
 - (i) employees not falling in areas of high turnover/scarcity who have completed 25 years on shift work may be given special consideration with respect to posting of day work, if available, subject to the exigencies of the service;
 - (ii) Shift workers aged 50 years or more, who have worked as night shift workers for 25 years or more may be given special consideration with respect to opportunities for voluntary early or phased retirement, subject to the exigencies of the service; and
 - (iii) Night shift workers drawing overtime allowances or any other allowance for work performed between 11.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. should not be paid the night shift allowance.

Recommendation 6

16.5.54 We recommend that the compensation measures as enunciated at the above paragraph should continue to prevail for officers operating on Shift Work/Roster/Staggered Hours.

Overtime

16.5.55 Employees who work beyond their normal working day are generally compensated for the extra hours either through overtime payment or compensatory time (equivalent time off).

General Principles

- 16.5.56 The general principles governing overtime in the public sector are as follows:
- (a) Overtime work should be kept to a minimum and should only be undertaken when unavoidable.
 - (b) Overtime work may be compensated by time-off in lieu of payment.
 - (c) Employees would not work overtime unless specifically requested to do so by their supervisors in the interest of the service.
 - (d) Senior officers of certain levels are not eligible for the payment of overtime.
 - (e) Overtime must be authorised in advance. Records should be kept of the work performed during an overtime period, that is, the actual times at which an officer commences and ceases to work overtime.

Eligibility for Overtime

- 16.5.57 Employees, except those in the grade of Surveillant *formerly Security Guard*, qualify for overtime allowance after having performed more than 40 hours' work in a week. Surveillant *formerly Security Guard* qualifies for overtime for work performed in excess of 60 hours.
- 16.5.58 Employees falling under the category of all other officers as specified in paragraph 16.5.3 and who normally put in less than 40 hours weekly are paid overtime allowance for any work done in excess of their normal hours between 33 ³/₄ and 40 hours, provided they work in excess of 40 hours in a week.
- 16.5.59 Employees who normally put in less than 40 hours weekly, and who work overtime for a continuous period of over one week, are paid for any work done in excess of their normal hours of work, provided they have worked an average of 40 hours a week during the period of overtime.

Overtime for Shift Work

- 16.5.60 The practice regarding overtime for shift workers is as follows:
- (a) a shift worker is not required to perform more than six days' work in a week;
 - (b) a shift worker is not entitled to overtime allowance for any work performed on Sundays and Public Holidays except where such work is performed in excess of the normal hours for the day or such work falls outside his shift;
 - (c) shift workers are paid overtime at approved rates for work in excess of 40 hours in a week, where the shift is of 40 hours weekly; and for work in excess of the appropriate multiple of 40 hours, where the shift covers a cycle; and
 - (d) employees in the grade of Surveillant *formerly Security Guard* are paid overtime at approved rates for work in excess of 60 hours in a week.

Overtime Rates and Computation of Overtime

- 16.5.61 Overtime allowance is based on the actual number of hours put in and the number of hours which the officer is deemed to have worked, as the case may be. A worker, on approved leave on any working day, is deemed to have put in eight hours of work or the number of hours he should have worked on that day, whichever is less.
- 16.5.62 A non-shift worker is deemed to have put in eight hours of work or the number of hours of work he should normally have worked, whichever is less, in respect of any Public Holiday falling on a weekday. According to a decision of the High Powered Committee, a shift worker, on approved leave on any shift, is deemed to have put in the number of hours he should normally have worked on that shift.
- 16.5.63 Where an officer performs the duties of a higher office, overtime allowance is computed on the basis of the total emoluments of the officer, inclusive of any acting or responsibility allowance drawn by him.

16.5.64 The computation of the hourly rate for overtime in respect of officers who are performing the duties of a higher office should be

$$\frac{\text{(Monthly Salary + Responsibility Allowance)} \times 12}{52 \times 33.75 \text{ or } 40 \text{ (as applicable)}}$$

16.5.65 The rates for payment of overtime are presently as follows:

Period	Hourly Rate
Between 6.00 a.m. and 11.00 p.m. on weekdays	1.5 times hourly rate
Between 11.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. on weekdays	twice hourly rate
On Sundays or Public Holidays and officially declared cyclone days	twice hourly rate

16.5.66 Hourly rates are calculated on the following basis:

- (a) For Workmen's Group including Surveillant *formerly Security Guard* and shift workers, workers on roster/staggered hours as well as officers who put in 40 hours of work weekly:

$$\frac{\text{Annual salary for the financial year}}{52 \times 40}$$

- (b) All other workers/officers

$$\frac{\text{Annual salary for the financial year}}{52 \times 33.75}$$

Recommendation 7

16.5.67 We recommend that all the provisions governing overtime be maintained.

16.5.68 We further recommend that the working week for computation of overtime should be as specified at paragraph 16.5.3.

Salary Ceiling for Overtime

16.5.69 At present, officers drawing less than Rs 42325 monthly are entitled to payment of overtime allowances.

16.5.70 Furthermore, officers drawing basic salary from Rs 42325 to Rs 56450 monthly, who are required to work beyond their normal working hours owing to the nature of their duties for the execution of urgent tasks or for completion of work which cannot be postponed, are paid the hours of overtime at 80% of the prescribed rate.

Recommendation 8

16.5.71 We recommend that officers drawing basic salary of less than Rs 47675 be eligible for the payment of overtime allowances.

16.5.72 We also recommend that officers drawing basic salary from Rs 47675 to Rs 62700 monthly, who are required to work beyond their normal working hours owing to the nature of their duties for the execution of urgent tasks or for completion of work which cannot be postponed, should be paid the hours of overtime at 80% of the prescribed rate.

Authority for Payment of Overtime

16.5.73 The authority for the approval and payment of overtime should continue to be as recommended in the ensuing paragraphs.

Recommendation 9

16.5.74 We recommend that Supervising Officers and Officers-in-Charge of Ministries/Departments should continue to approve the payment of overtime allowance at their own level, subject to availability of funds under the appropriate Vote item.

16.5.75 We further recommend that, in so doing, they should continue to ensure:

- (i) that such work is performed only when it is absolutely necessary, is cost-effective and is authorised in advance; and**
- (ii) strict monitoring of the work on an individual basis to prevent employees from resorting to excessive overtime.**

Overtime Allowance in the Disciplined Forces

16.5.76 Officers of the Disciplined Forces (Fire, Police, Prisons) are not eligible for overtime allowance but are paid a commuted allowance in connection with special assignments.

Recommendation 10

16.5.77 We recommend that officers of the Disciplined Forces (Fire, Police, Prisons) should continue to be paid a commuted allowance in connection with special assignments.

Additional Provisions governing Overtime

16.5.78 At present, officers who are called upon to put in beyond 33 ³/₄ hours and less than 40 hours weekly on a regular basis and who cannot be granted time-off for the extra hours put-in, are paid at the normal hourly rate provided that the officer puts in a minimum of five hours in excess of 33³/₄ hours weekly.

Recommendation 11

16.5.79 We recommend that officers who are called upon to put in beyond 33 ³/₄ hours and less than 40 hours weekly on a regular basis and who cannot be granted time-off for the extra hours put-in, be paid at the normal hourly rate provided that the officer puts in a minimum of five hours in excess of 33³/₄ hours

weekly. However, this provision would not apply to officers working on Shift/Roster/Staggered Hours.

Payment of Overtime to officers working at Staggered Hours

16.5.80 Specific provision exists for officers who are required, on a regular basis, to put in additional hours of work to cope with the demands of their jobs, for the grant, on application, of equivalent time-off for the extra hours put in. However, where it has not been possible for Management to grant time off to the officers within a period of four consecutive months, they are compensated at the normal hourly rate, subject to putting in a minimum of 15 extra hours in a month.

16.5.81 The fact that the above specific provision has been made in a few Ministries/Departments, staff side has represented that employees working at staggered hours are not being granted payment of overtime although they are regularly required to work in excess of 40 hours weekly and on public holidays. After examining the request, the Bureau considers that Management should stand guided by the provisions governing overtime and is recommending accordingly.

Recommendation 12

16.5.82 We recommend that, notwithstanding the specific provision which has been made in Volume 2 Part I of this Report in a few Ministries, officers working at staggered hours should be eligible for the payment of overtime, subject to satisfying the provision at paragraphs 16.5.57 and 16.5.65 above.

Compensation for work performed on Saturdays

16.5.83 Currently, officers operating on a five-day week basis, who would be called upon to work on Saturdays, are granted some form of compensation.

Recommendation 13

16.5.84 We again recommend that officers operating on a five-day week basis who are required to work on a Saturday, should, as far as practicable, be granted, in the ensuing week, time-off equivalent to the number of hours put in on that Saturday.

Attendance of duty after the lifting of a Cyclone Warning

Recommendation 14

16.5.85 We recommend that the protocol to be adhered to whenever a Cyclone Warning Class III or IV is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services, should continue to be as enunciated in the ensuing paragraphs:

- (i) after the lifting of a cyclone warning Class III or IV, and depending upon the time at which the official communiqué is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services, officers should attend duty as soon as the cyclone warning Class III or IV is officially lifted, provided this is done before 1000 hours, and on the assumption that public transport has resumed;**

- (ii) those officers who are required and bound to attend duty during a cyclone warning Class III or IV should continue to do so;**
- (iii) Heads of Ministries/Departments should closely monitor the situation once a cyclone warning is in force in the country and should take appropriate action to release their staff as soon as a cyclone warning Class III is officially issued during working hours; and**
- (iv) those officers who travel by their own car or by public transport to attend duty and who reside furthest from their place of work should be released first, followed by officers who live in the vicinity of the office and lastly, those who stay within walking distance of their workplace.**

Payment of Overtime for Workers on Shift/Roster on officially declared cyclone days

16.5.86 Presently workers on shift or roster, eligible for overtime, are remunerated at twice hourly rate for working on officially declared cyclone days and from the time cyclone warning Class III or IV is removed up to the time the next scheduled officers take over.

Recommendation 15

16.5.87 We recommend that workers on shift or roster, eligible for overtime, who continue to work after a cyclone warning Class III or IV is removed and until they are relieved, should be paid overtime at twice the hourly rate.

Control of Overtime

16.5.88 Overtime is occasionally necessary to get the job done but excessive overtime is hurtful to taxpayers. Every attempt should, therefore, be made to schedule workload so that the need for overtime is resorted to a minimum. However, situations may arise which make overtime unavoidable such as staff illness, special projects, and emergencies. Constant monitoring of overtime for work performed is the most cost-effective way to meet goals and responsibilities.

16.5.89 Public Sector Organisations have been apprised, through Circular Note No. 26 of 2019 of complaints on alleged malpractices pertaining to the payment of overtime in the Public Sector. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has drawn attention of Supervising Officers on allocation of overtime work to non deserving staff, falsification of attendance records and payment of overtime claim without proper monitoring and control. Overtime practices have also been adversely reported by the National Audit Office.

16.5.90 With a view to ensuring fairness and consistency in the performance of extra hours of work and reinforcing organisational integrity in the Public Sector, the Bureau is making appropriate recommendations.

Recommendation 16**16.5.91 The Bureau recommends that:**

- (a) Public Sector Organisations should adopt the “Best Practice Guide on Overtime Management in Public Sector” developed by ICAC; and**
- (b) to control overtime, Management, subject to the concurrence of the MPSAIR, must:**
 - (i) arrange for work shifts/pattern of work to be changed in case of work of long or continuous duration that need to be completed after normal working hours;**
 - (ii) ensure that reports and records be improved to strengthen accountability of overtime use;**
 - (iii) develop procedures and standards for evaluating when an unscheduled absence in identified posts may require scheduling officers for overtime work;**
 - (iv) identify posts which may not need scheduling officers for overtime if workload is light; and**
 - (v) adequately monitor overtime on an individual basis to prevent employees from working excessive overtime.**

16.5.92 The Bureau further recommends that Management of Organisations should submit a quarterly return to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development indicating the amount incurred for the payment of overtime.**Protocol/Work Arrangements in case of Heavy Rainfall Warnings**

16.5.93 With a view to avoiding chaotic situations in the Public Sector whenever a heavy/torrential rain warning is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services, the MPSAIR in consultation with all Ministries/Departments, particularly the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the Mauritius Meteorological Services and the National Land Transport Authority, has worked out a protocol on the subject and accordingly, issued a Circular.

16.5.94 According to the Circular Note No. 10 of 2017, the Protocol provides advice and practical guidelines on work arrangements in times of heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall and lays emphasis on the safety of employees and service continuity. The protocol is applicable to Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations, except for those:

- operating in the essential services;
- on shift, roster and staggered hours;
- whose services are required during extreme weather conditions; and
- where such a protocol already exists, albeit with some specific components/requirements.

- 16.5.95 Following the issue of a communiqué, during working hours, by the authority concerned, for the release of employees, the MPSAIR will issue a circular/email to Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Organisations and/or inform them through direct phone calls. The ensuring guidelines should, therefore, be adhered to:
- (i) Supervising Officers should immediately take necessary actions on the basis of established arrangements for the release of their employees.
 - (ii) Employees should await for instructions from Supervising Officers of their respective Ministry/Department/Organisation before leaving the Office.
 - (iii) Ministries/Departments/Organisations should consider the staggered release of employees giving due consideration to the needs of individual employees and their release in stages according to the work requirements and established arrangements.
- 16.5.96 With a view to ensuring the safety of employees, consideration should also be given to the following factors:
- (i) employees with mobility problems such as pregnant women or physically handicapped employees should be allowed to leave on a priority basis;
 - (ii) employees who live or work in affected areas should be allowed to leave earlier;
 - (iii) given that certain transport services might cease to operate in adverse weather conditions, employees who rely on such transport facilities should also be given priority to leave; and
 - (iv) for all other employees, arrangement should be made for their staggered release, according to the distance to be travelled. Ministries/Departments/Organisations should liaise, as far as possible, with the National Land Transport Authority to ensure availability of public transport.

Recommendation 17

16.5.97 We recommend that Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Organisations should ensure that the procedures laid down in the Protocol on Heavy Rainfall, as enunciated above are complied with.

