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இலங்கை சனாதிபதி  
President of Sri Lanka

**New Year Message**

I wish the Sinhala and Tamil New Year festival, which is the most splendid cultural extravaganza of the nation, to be a peaceful, a joyful, a prosperous as well as a healthy period for every citizen of our country.

The Sinhala and Tamil New Year that dawns with the transition of the Sun can be considered as a period of cheerfulness, harmony and development of mutual relationships. Nevertheless, a virus that has spread across the world has entered our Motherland, and as a result, presently we are facing the most devastating situation since the era of our ancestors.

Hence, this time we are not able to celebrate festivals collectively as the health specialists have emphasized the importance of maintaining social distance. I appeal to all of you who voluntarily rallied around to conquer any challenge faced by our country and nation, to commit yourselves now as well, to prevent the spread of this deadly virus by maintaining the social distance during this festival time.

The New Year period, nourished with the beauty of nature, is a festival that human beings pay their tribute to the environment and nature. We have now entered an era where the need to integrate with the environment is much felt.

Rituals of New Year that we practiced with utmost honour and commitment since a very long time, especially rituals like the lighting of the hearth, boiling a pot of milk, partaking the first meal of the New Year and the traditional transacting can still be conducted at the auspicious times but restricted to family members.

Children are the true beneficiaries of the happiness of New Year. Even though, there are certain limitations to celebrate New Year festivals this time, we, as adults, must create an environment for the children to experience the cheerfulness of this festive season. Therefore, I remind you affectionately to perform New Year rituals confined to your homes while ensuring that children feel and enjoy the spirit of the New Year. Amidst our New Year resolutions, let us join hands with strong determination to defeat this menace threatening our people and country.

May this be a peaceful and a prosperous New Year to all of you.

**Gotabaya Rajapaksa**

April 12, 2020