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இலங்கையின் பிரதம அமைச்சர்

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

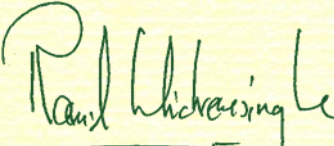
**MESSAGE FROM THE HON. PRIME MINISTER**

The Thai Pongal Festival that started as a celebration of the first harvest during the time of Chola kings in South India, has today become a major religious festival commemorated by Tamils living all over the world.

The rising of the sun is observed as the dawning of the New Year at Thai Pongal - it also signifies the strong bond maintained in agrarian communities with nature - the sun, the rain and the animals who contribute towards a bountiful harvest.

The Thai Pongal Festival shows us the value of sustainability in a diverse community while reminding us of the importance of gratitude and strong bonds.

I take this opportunity to wish all those celebrating Thai Pongal Festival prosperity and good wishes; in a spirit that truly celebrates unity in diversity, one that reaffirms our capacity as a nation to face the challenges of tomorrow as one people.

  
**Ranil Wickremesinghe**  
Prime Minister

11<sup>th</sup> January 2017