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இலங்கையின் பிரதம மந்திரி  
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

27<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Sri Lankan Prime Minister's Message on the World Tourism Day 2021**

It is my pleasure to pen down this message on the World Tourism Day celebrated annually by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) – the UN agency dedicated in educating the international community on the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic values.

The contribution of the tourism industry in strengthening the economy of Sri Lanka is very significant. Nearly three million people in the country are directly and indirectly involved in the tourism industry. It should be remembered with gratitude that they earn a major share of foreign exchange earnings for the country.

It is no secret that the peaceful and free atmosphere that prevailed after the end of the war in 2009 contributed to the rapid development of the tourism industry in the country. But following 2019 April, the insecurity in the country as well as the Covid-19 pandemic affected many businesses – most intensely the tourism industry.

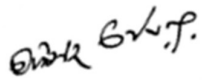
As a result of the progress of the vaccination program the government has been able to create the necessary environment to start rebuilding the collapsed business sectors.

The Ministry of Tourism is already taking the necessary steps and Sri Lankan Airlines is looking at new destinations and playing the role of the national carrier for the development of the tourism industry.

We have also taken on the responsibility of introducing new tourist attractions to our motherland, which is rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Despite the pandemic, we have never lost the determination to forge ahead as a country. Moving forward the Government aims to build an eco-cultural tourism industry that is in line with the global sustainability goals.

We shall celebrate World Tourism Day this year under the timely theme 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth' and I highlight that our goal is to provide a safe and healthy tourism experience for everyone visiting our motherland.



**Mahinda Rajapaksa**

Prime Minister

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka