

## Prime Minister's Thai Pongal message

Written by Hindu\_Dept\_Manager

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It is with immense pleasure that I wish all Tamil devotees in Sri Lanka and all over the world a very happy Thai Pongal festival. In the Hindu-Tamil Calendar, the first month of the year is known as 'Thai', and 'Pongal' infers a new dawn.

The arrival of a new harvest is celebrated on the day of Thai Pongal. It venerates Mother Nature and the Sun God, as an expression of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. This celebration of the dawn of the new year is both culturally and religiously significant to the Hindu people.

A traditional specialty of Pongal is a sweet rice made with rice from the new harvest, milk, and sugarcane, is made as an offering to the Sun God as a show of gratitude. These traditions and rituals give us an insight into and highlights the cultural and religious values of showing appreciation, respect and gratitude.

Although we differ in ethnicity, religion and language, our aspirations, hopes and dreams as Sri Lankan's are similar. Even though we are currently facing challenging times, the government is committed to uplift the living standards of all Sri Lankan citizens and is determined to work towards overcoming these challenges together as a nation.

Therefore, this year's Thai Pongal festival can be celebrated with renewed hope by those celebrating in Sri Lanka and all over the world. May the festivities of Thai Pongal and the values that it propagates, cultivate a spirit of peace and reconciliation between all Sri Lankan's.

I wish everyone celebrating a happy and prosperous Thai Pongal and the very best for the year ahead.

Mahinda Rajapaksa

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Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka