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Special Request in face of a National Catastrophe

As it was reported this morning, the risk of spreading Covid-19 pandemic has risen that, according to specialists, it can become a national catastrophe. I would like to remind the people of Sri Lanka that it is highly important to ensure one's own safety, and humbly request from everybody to follow health and safety precautions with utmost seriousness.

In order to conduct the upcoming general elections under a situation where the spread of the disease could be kept effectively under control, the Director-General of Health Services circulated a set of guidelines. However, it is saddening to note that these guidelines have not been notified by a gazette. In the absence of a gazette notification, public officials and law enforcement officers have no power to ensure that the said guidelines are followed and implemented. As of now, Hon. Prime Minister has made a request to follow health guidelines duly. In a highly competitive environment such as political campaigns, requests that have no legal binding can generate only modest outcomes, at best. During the last few weeks, it was observed that many politicians, unduly and hazardously manipulating the lack of legal protection to health guidelines, organized and participated in political rallies that clearly violated them.

Such irresponsible behaviour on the part of politicians allows the dedication and sacrifice of health and security officers go down the drain. Those politicians make a mockery out of the selfless service of over three months by those officers.

In a disturbing situation such as this, I reiterate the responsibility that people have to ensure their own safety first and foremost. Further, with utmost good faith I expect the Director-General of Health services would issue a gazette notification giving legal validity to the health guidelines for the General Election. I humbly request the relevant officials and political leadership to provide legal protection to the health guidelines so that the people will be saved from the threat of an outbreak of the pandemic.

Thank You,

Karu Jayasuriya
Chairman
Constitutional Council