

On 23 June 2021, we mark the fourth death anniversary of our former Executive Director, Dr Saman Kelegama, who helped propel the IPS to become the front runner of economic policy research in Sri Lanka. We remember Dr Kelegama on this occasion with gratitude.

In our articles, we focus on the themes of health and education. On health, Dr Dushni Weerakoon's comprehensive insight 'Vaccinating Against COVID-19 Inequities: the View from Asia' provides an overview of Asia's struggle in acquiring vaccines and outlines possible ways to achieve vaccine equity. On education, Wimal Nanayakkara's article 'Closing the Digital Divide of Sri Lanka amid COVID-19' notes that school closures and the shift to online learning following COVID-19 have increased the risk of poor children falling behind academically. He argues that the digital divide should be bridged by promoting inclusive education to help the vulnerable escape from the intergenerational poverty trap.

'World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) 2021' was marked on 31 May and IPS took to our social media platforms with the theme 'Commit to Quit', promoting smoking cessation, increasing access to cessation services, and empowering smokers to quit through 'quit and win' initiatives. This issue's 'Inside IPS' segment features Research Economist Dr Erandathie Pathiraja who joined us earlier this year. As always, we hope you find this issue insightful.

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Remembering Dr Saman Kelegama

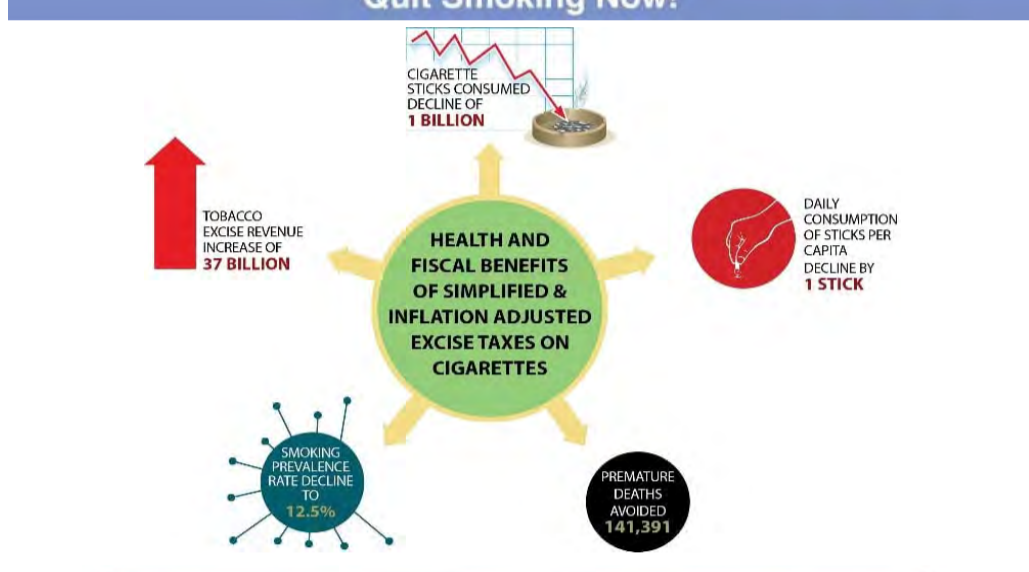
Dr Saman Kelegama's Fourth Death Anniversary 23 June 2021



"A Visionary, whose Legacy was Built on Humanity and Humility"

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World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) 2021



Issues in Expanding Tobacco Free Zones

- Implementation bottlenecks
- Power structures at the local level
- No monitoring & evaluation
- No proper costing
- Lack of sustainability
- Industry interferences

Inside IPS

Special interview featuring:

Dr Erandathie Pathiraja
Research Economist at IPS with interests in the analysis of industries and markets, competitiveness and SMEs.

- Q: Tell us about yourself and your role at IPS:**
Analysis of industries and markets, competitiveness and SMEs are my main areas of work. I am also interested in the links between the competitive structure of markets and the distribution of the benefits of technical change along industry value chains.
- Q: What do you enjoy most about your work?**
Researching new topics is always interesting and enjoyable! It's a journey of growth and development. Plus, I have an incredible amount of freedom in conducting research which I truly value!
- Q: What drew you into the field of economics?**
My basic degree is in agriculture and I studied multidisciplinary aspects of this field during the first few semesters including economics. My interest in economics grew steadily during that period, as I found it very logical and stimulating. For those reasons I decided to choose economics as my major.
- Q: What is your advice to someone who is looking at a career in economics?**
You need to be interested in what is happening around you and this includes politics and history, both local and international. I recommend magazines such as 'The Economist' and 'The Atlantic'. In our highly interconnected world, what is happening in another corner of the globe can impact consumers and government behaviour in our country, so it is important to be well-informed to be able to connect the dots. In addition to reading, it is important to develop strong mathematical and analytical skills.
- Q: What are you currently researching?**
I am working on the edible oil industry in Sri Lanka with a special focus on the palm oil industry and political economic analysis of tobacco control.
- Q: What is the one book you recommend to an aspiring economist?**
'The Wealth of Nations' by Adam Smith.
- Q: Something your colleagues may not know about you:**
I enjoy practicing mindfulness. It is very relaxing and also helps me stay focused.

Blogs



How Should Sri Lanka Finance the COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout?
By Harini Weerasekera and Kithmina Hewage

An effective vaccination strategy is a necessity for countries to move beyond COVID-19. However, it also requires careful policymaking to balance the financial cost of purchasing and delivering vaccines while stimulating economic growth. This article, based on a recent IPS analysis, provides an overview of the approximate costs associated with the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in Sri Lanka and evaluates policy options to finance the initiative. The authors argue that the government is best off pursuing a medium-term self-financing option through targeted tax interventions and if required, through external financing.

[See more >>>](#)

Quitters as Winners: The Role of Tobacco Free Zones in Smoking Cessation
By Chathurga Karunanayake

'Commit to Quit' is the theme of this year's World No Tobacco Day marked on 31st May 2021. It provides a welcome focus on smoking cessation by advocating strong cessation policies, increasing access to cessation services, and empowering users to successfully quit the deadly habit through 'quit and win' initiatives. The benefits of smoking cessation go beyond the individual; most immediately and directly through reduced involuntary smoke exposure and higher disposable income for household members. It is, therefore, crucial to have effective, long-term cessation interventions. According to the latest IPS research, strengthening existing Tobacco Free Zones (TFZs) and creating new TFZs are promising initiatives to promote smoking cessation. This blog examines the effectiveness of prevailing TFZs and suggests ways to improve them so that Sri Lanka's public healthcare can be further strengthened.

[See more >>>](#)



Vaccinating Against COVID-19 Inequities: the view from Asia
By Dushni Weerakoon

In the worldwide scramble for limited supplies of COVID-19 vaccines, the rich and influential – across countries and within countries – are likely to be handed a distinct advantage, while the poorer and more vulnerable will lag behind. At present, the majority (55%) of confirmed purchases are destined for high-income countries by advance purchase agreements with developers. In contrast, low and low middle-income countries have managed to secure only 1.4 billion doses (or less than 15%). The author explains the current shortage of vaccines in South Asia, while also exploring possible options to achieve equity.

[See more >>>](#)



Closing the Digital Divide in Sri Lanka amid COVID-19
By Wimal Nanayakkara

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), school closures and the sudden shift to online learning have increased the risk of poor children falling further behind in their studies. Policymakers need to bridge the digital divide, expand opportunities for technical education, and promote quality, equitable, and inclusive education to help the poor and vulnerable escape from the intergenerational poverty trap.

[See more >>>](#)

Dushni Weerakoon speaks at the RSA events webinar 'The Global Challenge of Vaccine Equity'



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