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# Himani Vithanage wins IPS' Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2021

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Himani Vithanage of the University of Colombo has won the Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2021, awarded by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS).

Her research study will examine the issue of school dropouts in the Nuwara Eliya district to identify the socio-economic and demographic factors that contribute to school dropouts in the district.

Himani's study will also focus on how COVID-19 and the sudden shift to online platforms have affected education in the district, especially for children in the estate sector, due to lack of access to the internet and computer facilities.



Himani  
Vithanage

"The main reason I chose this topic is because the estate sector has a comparatively poor performance in relation to education. Nuwara Eliya has the highest percentage of students who attended school for some time but dropped out later, due to financial difficulties. COVID-19, among many other reasons, could worsen this because of school closures and online learning not being viable among poor children in the disadvantaged regions (mainly in the estate sector) of the district. High levels of school dropouts would scale back the education performance of the region and have serious implications on the district's overall development process," Himani noted.

The Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant was established in 2018 to honour Dr. Saman Kelegama's legacy of independent research and public policy engagement in socio-economic development in Sri Lanka and the wider South Asian region. Dr. Kelegama was Executive Director of the IPS from 1995 to 2017. The grant aims to promote policy entrepreneurs among undergraduate students by encouraging policy relevant, rigorous and innovative socio-economic research.

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