

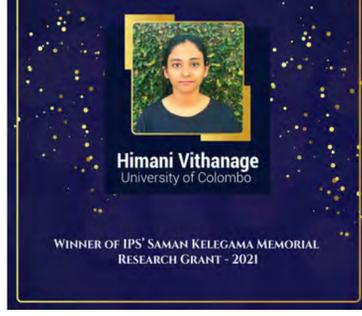
## This month's highlights:

- Himani Vithanage of the University of Colombo wins IPS' Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant 2021
- Lecture by Dr Bilesha Weeraratne on 'Dynamics in Migration and Remittances: Perspectives from the Sri Lankan Macroeconomy'
- Delivering for Nutrition (D4N) in South Asia: Implementation Research Conference in the Context of COVID-19
- 'Inside IPS' segment featuring IPS Research Economist Dilani Hirimuthugodage, who highlights the need to develop an effective Intellectual Property (IP) system in Sri Lanka
- Articles on education, the environment, and migration published during the month

We hope you find this issue informative and welcome your feedback as always.

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## Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant 2021



Himani Vithanage of the University of Colombo won IPS' Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2021.

Himani's research study will analyse the problem of school drop-outs in the Nuwara Eliya district to identify the socio-economic and demographic factors that contribute to school drop-outs in the district. Her 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 a lack of access to the internet and computer facilities.

## Dynamics in Migration and Remittances

### DYNAMICS IN MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES: Perspectives from the Sri Lankan Macroeconomy

IPS Research Fellow, Dr Bilesha Weeraratne delivered an insightful lecture on 'Dynamics in Migration and Remittances: Perspectives from the Sri Lankan Macroeconomy' as part of a lecture series organised by the South Asia Centre for Labour Mobility and Migrants (SALAM).

Dr Weeraratne highlighted that despite an immediate decline, remittances to the South Asian region improved fast leading to a better-than-expected performance in 2020. However, unlike the rest of the South Asian economies, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on Sri Lanka's migrant worker remittances were more complicated in recent months due to the country's macroeconomic issues.

[See more >>>](#)

## Delivering For Nutrition (D4N) in South Asia

### DELIVERING FOR NUTRITION (D4N) IN SOUTH ASIA: Implementation Research in the Context of COVID-19

In the 4th edition of the implementation research conference in nutrition and the first-ever regional conference on nutrition programming in the context of COVID-19, researchers, policy-makers, programme implementers from across the South Asia region gathered virtually on December 1-2.

They discussed new insights on the impact of COVID-19 on maternal health and young child nutrition outcomes, coverage of essential services, and learnings on strengthening nutrition programme delivery and uptake in crisis contexts. Participants shared evidence, insights, and analysis from on-the-ground research and implementation experiences to provide practical solutions for policymakers and programme implementers to act upon locally, nationally, and regionally.

[See more >>>](#)

## Inside IPS

### Special interview featuring: Dilani Hirimuthugodage

Research Economist at IPS with research interests in Agriculture and Agribusiness Development, Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, and Intellectual Property



Research Economist at IPS with research interests in Agriculture and Agribusiness Development, Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, and Intellectual Property

**Q: Tell us about yourself and your role at IPS:**

I joined IPS during my fourth year at the University of Colombo in 2006, to complete my internship as an undergraduate. After that, I was lucky enough to be absorbed into the main research cadre soon after completing the internship as a Research Assistant. Since then, I have gradually climbed the ladder and now serve the Institute as a Research Economist.

**Q: What are some of the challenging aspects of working as a researcher?**

As researchers, we always depend on available data, both primary and secondary. However, at times it is not easy to obtain field-level data as expected. Moreover, getting secondary data from certain institutes is also challenging due to various procedures and bureaucracy.

**Q: What are you currently researching?**

I am working on a project titled 'National Value Chain Development, Traceability and Marketing', which aims to implement a Geographical Indication (GI) system for pineapples and pepper. I am also involved in tobacco-related studies conducted by IPS on 'Identifying Enforcement Options to Ban Single Stick Cigarettes' and 'Indirect Promotion of Tobacco through Social Media'.

**Q: Intellectual property (IP) is one of your primary work areas. Can you explain why it matters?**

IP is vital for economic growth and development in several ways. It provides the IP owners with legally enforceable powers to prevent others from using their intellectual creations and gives the terms on how others could use them. As a developing country, the IP system in Sri Lanka is not well developed, and people are not sufficiently aware of the benefits of IP. Thus, it is crucial to raise awareness of its benefits.

**Q: What do you enjoy most in your work?**

The opportunity to work in a free environment, meet people and get first-hand experience in diverse fields. The ability to impact policy formulation – which finally is about transforming people's lives for the better – feels good!

**Q: What is the one book you recommend to an aspiring economist?**

'Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance' by Prof. Douglass C. North. It discusses how institutional changes influence the economic performance of countries and how society evolves.

**Q: Apart from your current field of research, what are your other pursuits?**

I love travelling and visiting ancient sites. Such breaks relax, energise, and motivate me to work productively.

## Blogs



### Reopening Schools in the New Normal: Key Focus Areas for Sri Lanka

By Ashani Abayasekara and Usha Perera

The decision to gradually reopen Sri Lankan schools – which have been shut for close to 20 months since COVID-19 first struck – is a welcome move. As of September 2021, 93% of countries had reopened schools either completely or partially, making Sri Lanka one of the last to do so. The decision to devote the next six months to recovering learning losses, giving precedence to essential syllabus areas and decision-making flexibility to schools, is encouraging news. This blog provides some insights into the current education recovery practices being adopted globally and draws attention to some important areas that can be incorporated into the current strategies being devised in Sri Lanka.



[See more >>>](#)



### Plastic Pandemic: The Ecological Fallout of COVID-19 and Policy Options for Sri Lanka

By Ruwan Samaraweera

The lockdown introduced in 2020 to curb the spread of COVID-19 saw the narrative "nature is healing" gain prominence. However, the notion that nature, in the absence of people, was healing fizzled out fairly quickly with the emergence of fresh environmental challenges, most notably, the resurgence of single-use plastics. This blog examines the ecological fallout of the pandemic and suggests policy options for Sri Lanka to avert the looming environmental disaster.

[See more >>>](#)



### Black, White and Grey Markets: The Dynamics of Foreign Exchange and Remittances in Sri Lanka

By Dr Bilesha Weeraratne

Despite the pandemic and related difficulties in remitting, inward remittances to Sri Lanka had picked up by December 2020 to record year-over-year growth of 5.8%, contrary to all expectations. The reasons for such a quick rebound include catching up on postponed remittances, accumulated terminal employment benefits and savings-related remittances of migrant workers laid off due to the pandemic, receipt of counter-cyclical remittances from less frequent remitters, and the shift from informal to formal channels. In the current context of the foreign exchange crisis in Sri Lanka, the latter is the most critical factor to focus on.

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