

## This month's highlights:

- New IPS publication 'Towards a Developed Urban Transportation System: Lessons for Sri Lanka' by Dr Bilesha Weeraratne and Chathurga Karunanayake calls for a legally binding master plan for public transportation in Sri Lanka whereby urban transport will become a fully integrated system instead of a collection of ad hoc projects.
- Talking Economics blog 'Taxing Tobacco: Benefits and Burdens of Beedi Taxes to Sri Lanka's Economy' by Dr Erandathie Pathiraja argues that beedi taxation is a low-hanging fruit to boost government revenue and lower foreign exchange outflows while reducing the risks to human health and tobacco-related healthcare costs.
- Talking Economics blog 'Global Oil Price Volatility: How Can Sri Lanka Cope?' by Binura Seneviratne discusses the main drivers of global oil prices, the effects of price volatility on the local economy, and outlines some policy options available for Sri Lanka to mitigate the adverse effects of oil price fluctuations.
- Young innovators Shahani Hettiarachchi and Ishira Jayasinghe speak to Dilani Hirimuthugodage about their inventions and share their views on how Sri Lanka can produce more young innovators to find solutions to the country's pressing socio-economic problems.
- Latest videos by Dr Asanka Wijesinghe and Dr Bilesha Weeraratne highlighting government expenditure, migration and remittances.

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

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## IPS Publication

NEW RELEASE!

Towards a Developed Urban Transportation System: Lessons for Sri Lanka

An effective transportation system can enhance the lives of Sri Lankans and improve their livelihoods significantly. This latest IPS publication uses a case study approach to examine transport initiatives adopted in Metro Manila, Bangkok and Hong Kong to learn lessons to improve public transportation in urban Sri Lanka. Lessons from these three vibrant cities offer valuable guidance for Sri Lanka's efforts to develop an improved urban transportation system.



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Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

A high-quality urban transportation system is vital for Sri Lanka's economic resurgence and to ensure the well-being of citizens. However, despite a comprehensive planning context and a relatively consistent policy context, the progress made in public transportation in Sri Lanka is limited. Using a case study approach, Dr Bilesha Weeraratne and Chathurga Karunanayake examine the transport initiatives of three major Asian cities with similar contexts that faced many challenges in creating an efficient system. The study calls for a legally binding master plan for public transportation in Sri Lanka, whereby urban transport will become a fully integrated system instead of a collection of projects.

To purchase a copy of this publication,  
Contact: Amesh Thennakoon on 0773 737717 or amesh@ips.lk.

## Blogs



Taxing Tobacco: Benefits and Burdens of Beedi Taxes to the Sri Lankan Economy

*By Dr Erandathie Pathiraja*

Beedi smoking is widespread in Sri Lanka, accounting for nearly 23% of the country's smokers. The absence of a filter makes it an unsafe product exposing its users to nicotine, tar, and carbon monoxide. Beedi is possibly more harmful to human health than other forms of smoking. However, it remains an underregulated product despite the provisions of the Tobacco Tax Act No. 8 of 1999. This blog argues that beedi taxation is a low-hanging fruit to boost government revenue and reduce the foreign exchange outflow with the added benefit of improving the health of Sri Lankans. An excise tax on beedi can benefit the economy in several ways: it would directly increase government revenue, lower beedi consumption, and decrease raw material import costs thus reducing dollar outflows. Lower beedi use would also lower smoking-related health issues, thereby reducing the government's expenditure on health.

See more >>>

Global Oil Price Volatility: How Can Sri Lanka Cope?

*By Binura Seneviratne*

Global oil prices are in the headlines once again with crude oil prices soaring following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Global crude oil prices have shot up; the Brent increased by around 22% to USD 114 a barrel at the end of May 2022, from a low of USD 93 a barrel in early February 2022. The volatility of global oil prices has worsened Sri Lanka's economic woes. This blog discusses the main drivers of oil prices, the effects of price volatility on the Sri Lankan economy, and outlines some policy options available to mitigate the adverse effects of oil price fluctuations.



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## Interviews with Young Innovators

**Youth and Innovation: How can Sri Lanka Produce more Young Innovators?**

IPS' Dilani Hirimuthugodage spoke to **Shahani Hettiarachchi** and **Ishira Jayasinghe**, two up-and-coming young innovators, to learn about their inventions and to also get their views on how Sri Lanka can produce more innovators to find solutions to some of the country's pressing socio-economic problems.





Shahani Hettiarachchi

**Q: Tell us about some of your inventions:**

Of my 60-plus inventions, the most popular one is the S7 Antimicrobial Respirator which is a medical face mask designed to protect the human respiratory system from contamination. Another invention is the Avira S Fabric which is an antimicrobial fabric used to manufacture medical wear such as surgical gloves, lab coats, and surgical gowns. Some of the other inventions are the Smart Chrome Cuvette, Eco Bin Chrome Universal Indicator, LP Gas Sensor: Agni HAL (heat resistant heat insulator material), and Trio (three-in-one cabin filter). I am currently in the process of securing intellectual property rights (IPRs) for these inventions. In the future, I also plan to file patents locally and internationally to obtain IP protection under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

**Q: How can Sri Lanka produce more youth innovators to contribute to the country's economic resurgence?**

Young Sri Lankans have an important role to play in the country's economic development and help set the country on the path to prosperity. It is vital to encourage and improve collaboration between young scientists in various fields by enhancing links between the already established institutes, such as the National Intellectual Property Office, National Innovation Agency, Sri Lanka Inventors Commission, etc. In my view, inventors, investors, and entrepreneurs must also work together. Industries should identify and declare their research gaps and clearly articulate the innovation needs in their fields to address such gaps. This will make it easier to launch novel products or products with enhanced features.

**Q: What factors have encouraged you to develop your creativity?**

I have always had a curious mind and a thirst for knowledge. I spend hours researching on the internet and reading scholarly articles. My educational background is in chemistry, molecular biology and biotechnology, nanoscience, and nanotechnology fields. This has provided a solid foundation for creative thinking. I also meditate as it helps fuel my creativity!

For example, the NASA Space Apps Challenge offers opportunities for inventors to transfer technology and commercialise their inventions easily. Similarly, providing access to incubation labs to develop prototypes and allow innovators to develop their novel ideas to investors and stakeholders will be useful. It is also important to provide more financial aid for inventors, especially for advanced patent search services and digital marketing for products.

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

The high cost of filing an international patent and PCTs, and the difficulty of obtaining and securing the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are the main barriers since they must be renewed regularly. The mixing of electronic devices and data theft is another challenge.





Ishira Jayasinghe

**Q: Which of your inventions has attracted the most amount of interest and why?**

The most popular one is the Household Drinking Cup. It is like a thermal cup, but with added safety features such as insulation to prevent hot burns. Using my invention, anyone can consume a hot beverage safely without having to worry about burning their tongue or lips as the heat is reduced to a desirable level. Likewise, cool beverages retain their temperature allowing users to lusciously enjoy a cool drink without feeling rushed. So far only this invention is patented, but I intend to patent the others once completed.

**Q: What factors have encouraged you to develop your creativity?**

I was an active member of the young inventors' club at Girls' High School, Kandy. Throughout my time, the school encouraged and supported me to participate in several competitions, enabling me to improve my inventions and ideas. The National Intellectual Property Office also assisted in approving my proposal to obtain the patent for my invention.

**Q: How can Sri Lanka produce more youth innovators to contribute to the country's economic resurgence?**

Creativity should be encouraged at the school level, beginning in the primary grades by introducing a new subject for creativity and innovation. Schools can create an environment for new ideas by setting up 'idea boxes' - appointing a panel to select the best and most realistic ideas and supporting innovative students financially and technically. This can be done in universities as well. Workshops and seminars by experts can also help motivate and guide young people while sharing hands-on tips. Furthermore, more annual competitions at the provincial or district level will also encourage greater youth innovation.

**Q: What barriers have you faced so far as a young inventor?**

I have not faced any significant barriers since I had the basic knowledge of heat transfer theories, and my school provided technical support. I had the support of my parents as well. As my invention is classified as an eco-friendly one, finding materials to prepare my prototype model was also quite easy. Building it was the only difficult part. All in all, I have not faced any major barriers.

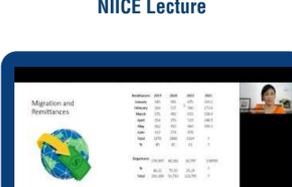
## Featured Videos

Dr Asanka Wijesinghe | Measures on Government Expenditure and Rebuilding Investor Confidence | The People's Platform | NewsFirst



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Dr Bilesha Weeraratne | Sri Lankan Economic Crisis and Role of Remittances and Tourism | NIICE Lecture



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