

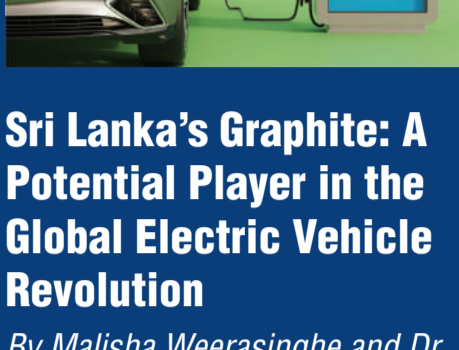
## This month's highlights:

- In a new Talking Economics (TE) blog, Malisha Weerasinghe and IPS Research Fellow Dr Asanka Wijesinghe explore the potential benefits for Sri Lanka's graphite resources in the global electric vehicle revolution.
- IPS Research Officer Ruwan Samaraweera, in a TE blog, delves into Sri Lanka's Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) providing insights into the challenges, costs, relevant policy initiatives and solutions to address the issue.
- Ayesha Basnayake of the University of Colombo wins the Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2023.
- IPS Research Officer Usha Perera shares her thoughts on winning the coveted Commonwealth Shared Scholarship for 2023.
- In the 'Inside IPS' segment, IPS Research Assistant Chaya Dissanayake speaks about improving pandemic responses for women workers in the apparel sector and the Doing Good Index survey.
- Video featuring Dr Bilesha Weeraratne discussing the significance of comprehending and effectively managing migration in the Sri Lankan economy, especially in the context of the economic crisis in TV1's Face the Nation live panel discussion.

We hope you find this issue insightful. Your feedback is, as always, welcome!

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## Blogs



### Sri Lanka's Graphite: A Potential Player in the Global Electric Vehicle Revolution

By Malisha Weerasinghe and Dr Asanka Wijesinghe

Sri Lanka has a rich history of mining and exporting graphite, which thrived during the World Wars, hitting 35,000 metric tons in annual exports. The vein graphite produced by Sri Lanka stands out for its remarkable purity, flawless crystal structure, and strong electrical conductivity, making it suitable for various commercial uses. However, in 2023, only 2,792 metric tons were exported, yielding approximately USD 6 million in revenue. The emerging trend towards electromobility on a global scale presents fresh opportunities to revive Sri Lanka's graphite industry. This blog explores the potential benefits for Sri Lanka's graphite resources in the emerging landscape.

[See more >>>](#)

### Bridging Conservation and Livelihoods: Addressing the Human-Elephant Conflict in Sri Lanka on World Elephant Day

By Ruwan Samaraweera



On World Elephant Day, attention turns to the unique challenges faced by Sri Lanka in the realm of human-elephant conflict (HEC). HEC's escalating toll paints a stark reality. Human communities endure property damage, crop loss, and tragic fatalities, amplifying poverty and socio-economic instability. In 2022, as per the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), Sri Lanka documented a total of 145 human fatalities resulting from HEC. Simultaneously, elephants face habitat loss, injuries, and mortality due to retaliatory killings and encounters with human settlements. DWC reported a substantial rise in elephant mortality, reaching a peak with a recorded total of 433 deaths in 2022. Therefore, the urgent need for implementing effective solutions to minimise HEC in the country becomes paramount.

[See more >>>](#)

## Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant 2023



Ayesha Basnayake of the Department of Economics, University of Colombo is the winner of the Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2023. Her research study will examine the efficiency and effectiveness of an electronic tax payment system, compared to a manual tax payment system for the taxpayers. Her study will also analyse how to simplify the existing complex tax system through an electronic tax payment system and how to reduce the number of tax avoiders and tax evaders using an electronic tax payment system and will demonstrate the areas which are to be developed in order to increase direct tax income in Sri Lanka through an electronic tax payment system.

[See more >>>](#)

## Commonwealth Shared Scholarship 2023

### IPS Research Officer Usha Perera Receives Commonwealth Shared Scholarship



IPS Research Officer Usha Perera has been awarded the coveted Commonwealth Shared Scholarships for 2023. Usha Perera, who holds a BA in Economics with First Class Honours from the University of Colombo, worked at the Health, Labour and Education Policy Unit at IPS.

The Commonwealth Shared Scholarships are offered for candidates from least developed and lower-middle-income Commonwealth countries to undertake full-time master's study on selected courses, jointly supported by UK universities. IPS wishes Usha success in her future endeavours and hopes she will continue to strengthen and contribute to research in the field of economics in Sri Lanka.

[See more >>>](#)

## Events

### The Asia Regional Learning Workshop for Women RISE at University of Monash, Malaysia



The Asia Regional Learning Workshop for Women RISE, an initiative aimed at fostering women's health and economic empowerment during the COVID-19 recovery phase, took place on 26-27 July, 2023, at the University of Monash, Malaysia. Representing the IPS IDRC-Women RISE research team were IPS Research Fellow Dr Asanka Wijesinghe, IPS' Director of Research Dr Nisha Arunatilake, and IPS Research Fellow Dr Erandathie Pathiraja, along with Mr Anuradha Kumarasiri from the National Planning Department. During the workshop, Dr Asanka Wijesinghe presented the progress of the project titled "A Participatory Study on Improving Pandemic Policy Responses to Reduce Adverse Health Effects on Women Workers in the Export Sector of Sri Lanka."

[See more >>>](#)

### Training and Awareness Session on the "Geographical Indication (GI) System in Sri Lanka"



IPS Research Economist Dilani Hirimuthugodage recently highlighted the importance of a Geographical Indication (GI) system for Sri Lanka's agriculture sector. She shared international best practices in her presentation on the "Geographical Indication (GI) System in Sri Lanka" at a training and awareness session conducted for officers attached to the office of the Deputy Provincial Director of Agriculture (Gampaha). The training session, organised by the Development of Minor Export Crops Plantation Division of the Ministry of Plantation Industries, brought together nearly one hundred agriculture officers in the Gampaha District.

[See more >>>](#)

## Inside IPS

### Special interview featuring:



Chaya Dissanayake  
Research Assistant, IPS

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

I work as a research assistant under the supervision of Dr Asanka Wijesinghe, in the Macro, Trade and Competitiveness Unit at IPS. I am currently reading for my MSc in Integrated Water Resources Management at the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture in Peradeniya, and I have a BSc in Agriculture from the University of Jaffna. I was awarded the South Asian Water Fellowship by the International Development and Research Institute (IDRC), Canada in 2019 for climate change-related research.

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

Currently, I am part of the IPS research team for Improving Pandemic Responses to Reduce Adverse Health Effects on Women Workers in Sri Lanka's Apparel Sector project. I recently concluded the data collection process in Sri Lanka for the Doing Good Index 2024. This extensive survey spanning over 14 Asian countries is led by the Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society, Hong Kong. The outcome of this project is to determine how well the country's social delivery sector had performed compared to the rest of Asia and the needs of the organizations engaged in the sector.

Additionally, I am analysing the public perception towards mega infrastructure projects of the Hambantota International Port and the Lakvijaya Coal Power Plant, Norochcholai as a part of a study undertaken by the Macro, Trade and Competitiveness Unit at IPS.

**Q:** In your opinion, what are the anticipated long-term benefits of improving pandemic responses for the apparel sector, and how will these benefits contribute to the overall economic and social development of Sri Lanka?

With climate change, there is a chance of more frequent epidemics and pandemic recurrences, especially in tropical countries. So, preparedness for future pandemic situations is very important for Sri Lanka. The apparel industry in Sri Lanka is made up of a workforce who are predominantly women. The industry is also one of the top contributors to the country's export revenue.

Improved pandemic response for this sector means to provide a safe work environment for the workers during a crisis. In the long term, this means lower investment risks for the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Safer working conditions may attract more women workers into the industrial labour force which is imperative for the social development of the country.

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

The DGI 2024 survey is aimed at producing a comprehensive list of strengths and weaknesses of the social delivery sector in the country. It will show how Sri Lanka fares among the other economies of the region and how accountable and transparent our social sector is in comparison to the rest of Asia. Furthermore, the final report will also tell us about the countries with the best conditions and how they were able to achieve them.

Once the report is finalised, IPS will host a dissemination workshop that would provide a platform for various stakeholder organizations in Sri Lanka to actively communicate their needs and concerns in adopting best practices carried out in peer organizations in Asia.

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

The one thing that I enjoy the most about my work is the sense of fulfilment of being part of positive changes. Considering the sheer magnitude of the practical problems, and the capacity of a young researcher's work, the change that we can make in the world can sometimes feel so abysmal. Working at IPS has made me realise that the magnitude of the contribution we feel that is not instantaneous but cumulative. I feel that the work I do here would contribute to the cumulative positive changes over time and this gives me reason to enjoy working with data more than I already do.

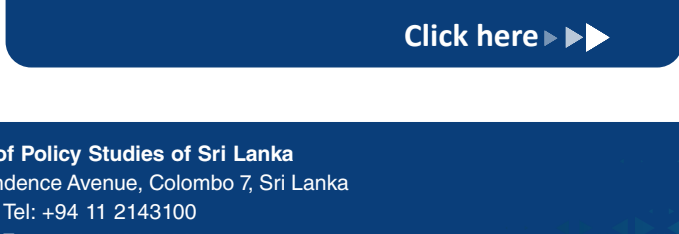
**Q:** What are some challenging aspects of working as a researcher?

Data availability can be very challenging at times. Sri Lanka, like many other developing countries, is still in the process of transforming the documentation processes from analogue to digital. As such, finding some information could take many hours of work to locate, access and compile into a digital format.

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

"Water: A Biography" by Dr Giulio Boccaletti is a book I am currently reading. It is not complicated by economics theories and encompasses many other areas such as human history, politics, and the environment. But for someone aspiring to venture into economics from natural sciences as I did, it is a fascinating read. This book narrates the journey of mankind from identifying the importance of a water source for a settlement to the virtual water trade and the democracy and equity of water trade. Dublin principals define water as an economic good. In Sri Lanka, the current dialogue on equitable sharing of water resources between agriculture, drinking and sanitation, and hydropower generation has created a backdrop where aspiring Sri Lankan economists can explore this book with a unique perspective.

### Dr Bilesha Weeraratne | Brain Drain in Sri Lanka | TV1's Face the Nation



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## Featured Video