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Empowering Sri Lankan women: Highlights from the National Policy Conference on Women’s Access to Decent Work in Sri Lanka

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f By Kimuthu Kiringoda and Himani Vithanage

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Himani Vithanage is a Research Assistant working on health, education and labour policy at IPS. She was the recipient of IPS' Saman Kelegama Memorial Research Grant for 2021. This blog is based on her research study analysing the issue of school dropouts in the estate sector of Sri Lanka. She holds a BA in Economics from the University of

Colombo, and a BSc in Economics and Finance from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

In Sri Lanka, only 7.7% of working-age females are engaged in formal employment with decent wages and decent working hours. The country's persistent challenge of low female labour force participation is compounded by a multitude of unique barriers to improving women's access to decent work.

Decent work is multifaceted, incorporating productive work that delivers a fair income in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity (ILO, 1999). Due to the heavier household and caregiving responsibilities falling on women, they face challenges when participating in the labour force and securing decent work.

Sri Lanka's labour market is characterised by several gender-specific challenges. Dr Nisha Arunatilake, Director of Research at IPS, notes that employers consider women's additional household and caregiving responsibilities when hiring workers, affecting the demand for female workers. Furthermore, Sri Lankan legislation places higher costs on employers when hiring females, including maternity leave and added security expenses. Even when women are recruited, they face constraints and disadvantages in opportunities for promotions and career development owing to their household duties.

Another main issue in Sri Lanka is the limited availability of decent jobs, especially outside the Western province. As stated by Dr Arunatilake, "about 30% of the jobs in these areas are in the agriculture sector," which mostly comprises vulnerable jobs with low income. This, combined with employers' preference for recruiting males, further restricts women's access to decent work opportunities.

A recent IPS study revealed that only 8% of Sri Lanka's working-age population is engaged in formal employment with decent wages and decent working hours. For females, the percentage is 7.7%, lower than the male percentage of 8.3%. The study also emphasised that access to decent work improves when women are English literate and have higher levels of education.

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IMF's Senior Mission Chief, Peter Breuer

Sri Lanka is showing first signs of recovery as it finds itself in an election year, and therefore, what happens before the elections as well as after them will be crucial for the economic recovery in Sri Lanka, IMF's Senior Mission Chief, Peter Breuer said on Friday.

He said so at a press briefing held at the conclusion of the IMF Staff Visit to Sri Lanka.

“This year is expected to be an election year. During our visit, we listened to political parties, their perspectives and angles of their economic policy perspectives. So, of course, what takes place in Sri Lanka in the run up to the elections and afterwards will have an impact on the country's recovery and growth path and how it extricates itself from the ongoing crisis.” he

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German Ambassador hails 'reliable partnerships' that attract investments to Sri Lanka

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German Ambassador, Dr. Felix Neumann and Chief Delegate of AHK Sri Lanka, Marie Antonia von Schönburg speak at the reception event held at Taj Samudra Colombo recently

Says both countries should brace for geopolitical risks in 2024

Opines restructuring external debt will be crucial for SL this year

Urges SL to fight corruption seriously and shore up investor confidence

By Sanath Nanayakkare

Reliable and trustworthy Sri Lankan businesses that share the same ethical and compliance standards with German industry leaders have the potential of attracting more German investments to Sri Lanka, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Colombo, Dr. Felix Neumann said in Colombo recently.

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ComBank wins Platinum for Jaffna branch at Green Building Council Awards

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Commercial Bank's Assistant General Manager – Services Chinthaka Dharmasena accepts the Platinum award on behalf of the Bank from GBCSL Director Lionel Nawagamuwa in the presence of other officials

The Jaffna branch of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon has been awarded a Platinum rating by the Green Building Council of Sri Lanka (GBCSL), according it the highest available award in Sri Lanka for Green Buildings.

The accolade was presented at the 2023 awards of the GBCSL, at which Commercial Bank also received an Honourable Mention in the Banking Sector for the Council's Green Business Leadership Award 2023.

Jaffna is the third Commercial Bank branch to receive a GBCSL award. In 2022, the Bank's

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