

**AN ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF
THE PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN THE
SOUTH AT HAMBANTOTA**

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ABSTRACT

The Government of Sri Lanka is in the threshold of commencing a major development project in the south by constructing the second International Airport in the country at an estimated cost of US\$ 65 million utilizing 880 hectares of land in Hambantota District as a response to development problems of the country. This is the first occasion in the development history of the country that a government is exploiting the potential in the aviation sector to foster development while constructing the much needed second international airport in the country.

The global trend is modern aviation to use large aircraft similar to Airbus 380 which will increase the productivity while reducing the operational cost; these large aircraft which are designed to carry more passengers, more cargo requires much larger runways than the runway available at Katunayake. Therefore, to be competitive in the field of aviation, and to attract leading airline operators, it is necessary to upgrade airports in the country to accommodate such large aircraft that will dominate the international air transportation in near future. Moreover, having an alternate airport in the country will also be an added advantage.

The research was conducted in a multi disciplinary approach to evaluate the policy and to ascertain the economic, social and environmental implications of this project. Primary data was collected through a survey. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with specialists in the fields of economy, development, aviation and environment. Series of interviews were also conducted with community leaders, businessmen and with farming

community in Weerawilla. Secondary data was collected through books, publications and internet. Special emphasis was given to books and articles written on issues pertaining to development.

This project will support economic development by generating revenue and creating employment opportunities. The proposed site is located in close proximity to two protected sanctuaries Bundala National Park and Weerawilla Sanctuary. Operating of large jet aircraft will endanger birds and wild life. Moreover, over 500 families will have to be relocated in suitable locations.

Therefore, an alternative site is preferred to be selected for this construction in order to enjoy the real benefits of having an International Airport while minimizing social and environmental implications.