

# **China Responds Positively To Sri Lanka's Development Plans**

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Malik Samarawickrama, Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade, had a series of productive meetings during his visit to Beijing. Sagala Ratnayake, minister of Southern Development, Law and Order and Ambassador Karunasena Kodituwakku was also a part of the discussions.

Minister Samarawickrama took the opportunity of his meetings with Hu Xiaolian, chairperson - Exim Bank of China, and Zhen Zhijie, governor - China Development

Bank, to convey the message that the government of Sri Lanka is accelerating the implementation of the ongoing Chinese project to provide briefing on a pipeline of new Chinese FDI projects, including the Economic Zone, ship repair project and airport development in Hambantota. New infrastructure projects discussed included the extension of the Southern Highway, Kandy and Ratnapura Expressways, and portable and waste water projects.

The minister also drew attention to possible Chinese involvement in the Sri Lankan government's development plans, exploring ways and means of mobilising Exim Bank and China Development Bank investment for new projects, as well as strengthening cash flow and liability management of ongoing projects. He further discussed the importance of the early completion of the FTA with China which would give Sri Lanka preferential access to a market of three billion people as it already has preferential trade agreements with India and Pakistan.

Both sides recognised the benefits that can be leveraged through the positive relationship between trade and investment, and the importance of promoting Sri Lanka as a tourist destination for the 120 million Chinese who now travel abroad.

They recognised that China's 'Going Abroad' strategy and Sri Lanka's very favourable location on the Maritime Silk Road provided a strong basis for strengthening Sino-Lanka economic relations.

The Chinese authorities were positive about Sri Lanka's prospects as a strategically-located platform for trade, investment and tourism. They saw opportunities for strengthening bilateral cooperation and looked forward to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's April visit to China to take the relationship to a new level.