Sri Lanka opens second Consulate office in China

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The Government of Sri Lanka opened its second Consulate office in China, in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, on 15th December 2009. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hussein Bhaila and Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to China Karunathilleka Amunugma represented Sri Lanka at the opening ceremony while the Sichuan province was represented by Executive Vice Governor Wei Hong.

The establishment of a Consulate office in Chengdu follows a proposal made to President Mahinda Rajapaksa by the Governor of Sichuan during the Presidential visit in August 2008. Accordingly arrangements were made for the opening of the Consulate office on the directives of Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. The opening of a Consulate office in Chengdu is expected to further boost investment and trade ties between Sri Lanka and the Sichuan Province. Sichuan is the 5th largest province in China and is the third most populous with a population of 87 million. Chengdu provides land transport to central and southern provinces of China and neighboring countries including Thailand. In a 2007 public appraisal Chengdu was chosen as one of the 10 cities to invest in - out of a total of 280 urban centres - in China. With huge economic potential and a GDP of US$138, the Sichuan Province could be one of the most important trade and investment partners for Sri Lanka in Central and Western China. Home to more than 16 colleges and universities, there are nearly 150 Sri Lankan students studying in Chengdu and in the neighboring provinces. The Consulate office in Chengdu will facilitate consular services to the Sri Lankan student population, while opening up new avenues for educational opportunities. In his address at the opening ceremony the Deputy Foreign Minister acknowledged the support provided by the Sichuan provincial government for the opening of the new Consulate office and further appreciated the goodwill gesture accorded by the Sichuan government in providing office premises for the consulate in a prime location in the heart of the city, for a period of three years. On the sidelines of the opening ceremony, the Deputy Foreign Minister also held bilateral discussions with the Sichuan provincial government representatives. The Chengdu Consulate office is the 58th overseas diplomatic/consular post of Sri Lanka. Accordingly the total number of Sri Lankan consular representations now stands at eleven. Senior government officials, local media and Sri Lankan community living in Chengdu also participated at the opening ceremony. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo 16 December 2009