



Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and Secretary of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee Dr. Yuan Jiajun.



Chongqing-Sri Lanka Roundtable on Poverty Alleviation and Development Cooperation at Temple Trees, Colombo

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Chongqing economists listed the benefits of potential collaboration for Sri Lanka and Saipan.

- **Smart Agriculture for Islands:** Samurthi Plus Vertical AI technologies, already proven in Sri Lanka, can adapt to Saipan's specific conditions, empowering local farmers with data-driven insights on crop selection, sustainable practices, and optimal market timing.
- **Tradition + Technology:** Sri Lanka's rich agricultural heritage can revitalise local methods in Saipan, blending tradition with modern techniques and developing value-added products rooted in cultural traditions.
- **Reaching Global Markets:** Ni Hao Zhong Guo Digital Trade Platform and World Digital Investment Platform can link Saipan's unique, sustainably farmed products with niche markets in Asia and beyond, boosting incomes for island communities.
- **Youth as Change makers:** CSDP's and SDGs Earth Action's focus on youth creates fertile ground for exchanges, fostering shared innovations and a sense of global sustainability citizenship.

Sustainable Development Collaboration

■ **US territory Saipan and China's Chongqing partnership on poverty alleviation in Sri Lanka**

■ **Sri Lanka's efforts on SDGs could receive global support**



Sugeeswara Senadhira

Sri Lanka needs support from international partners to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the target year 2030. Sri Lanka is actively piloting the programme within 1,400 Grama Sevaka Divisions under Samurthi Plus National Empowerment Task-force, focusing on rural revitalisation through economic and social empowerment.

China's Chongqing Municipality, which is directly under Beijing, held a 'Chongqing-Sri Lanka Roundtable on Poverty Alleviation and Development Cooperation' last year, and plans are afoot now to hold its 2nd Roundtable next month to discuss the implementation phase to support Sri Lanka's poverty alleviation and social empowerment plans.

Stressing the success of the Roundtable held in Sri Lanka, Deputy Director of Liang Ping District of Chongqing Municipality, Xiong Liang, elaborated plans to expand global assistance to Sri Lanka's SDGs drive.

The Chinese expert is of the opinion that this initiative's potential extends far beyond its current scope, with the possibility of reaching island communities in the Pacific. Saipan, the capital of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) of the United States, shares characteristics that make it a compelling candidate for collaboration. The CNMIs are directly under Washington's rule.

Focused partnership

Eng. Liu Yang Sloan, Chief Advisor to the State Minister of Social Empowerment, is also confident that Sri Lanka's SDGs efforts could receive a boost from a unique Sri Lanka-China-USA partnership focused on sustainable development.

The CNMI, a US commonwealth, comprises a chain of islands with Saipan as its economic and cultural hub. Its history has been shaped by various influences, including its indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian people, Spanish colonization, German administration, Japanese control, and eventually its current political status with the United States.

Chinese experts, pointing out that Saipan's location makes it the closest US

territory to Asia, expressed confidence that this proximity offers several advantages from an SDGs perspective – facilitating trade, knowledge exchange, and cultural connection with the broader Asia-Pacific region.

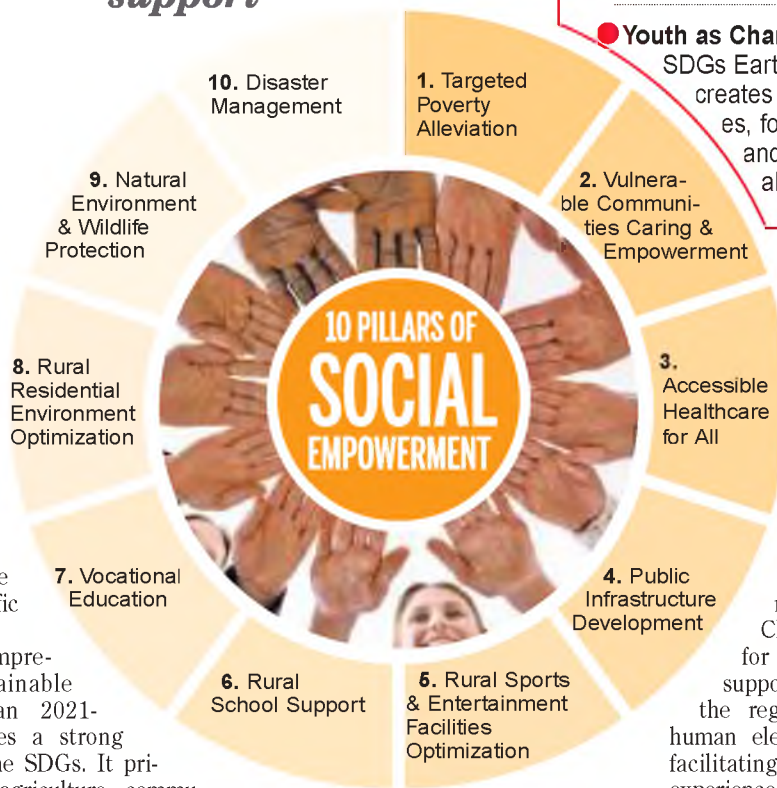
"Saipan's Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan 2021-2030 demonstrates a strong commitment to the SDGs. It prioritises localised agriculture, community food production, and knowledge exchange – all core pillars of the One Million Silk Road Beautiful Villages Action (SRBVA)," Liu Yang Sloan said.

During the visit of a high-level Sri Lankan delegation to Chongqing in January 2024, Deputy Director of Liang Ping District of Chongqing Municipality, Xiong Liang, said global technical know-how will help Sri Lanka to speed up poverty alleviation goals. Expanding global cooperation to the United States would immensely benefit Sri Lanka to achieve SDGs.

Addressing the Chongqing-Sri Lanka Roundtable on Poverty Alleviation and Development Cooperation at the Temple Trees in Colombo on July 22 last year, Secretary of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee Dr. Yuan Jiajun assured every possible assistance to ensure speedy progress in poverty alleviation and food security. He said Chongqing could help Sri Lanka to double rice production by introducing hybrid rice varieties developed by China. In addition to hybrid rice, Chongqing has also developed rice varieties that can be grown in dry zones with water shortages and also in saline lands near the seacoast, he said.

Powerful governing body

Dr. Yuan, who is also a Member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, which is the powerful governing body, said that he would work towards enhanc-



trusted mediator, facilitating inclusive China-USA cooperation focused on development projects within the SRBVA framework.

Additionally, Sri Lanka boasts a workforce with high-standard professional skills, including engineers, agricultural specialists, and educators. Collaboration with Saipan and the CNMI provides an opportunity for these skilled Sri Lankans to support capacity building within the region. This strengthens the human element of the project while facilitating valuable knowledge and experience exchange between Sri Lanka and the Pacific Islands.

In an era often marked by geopolitical tensions, this trilateral collaboration centred on the SDGs creates a positive platform for China and the USA to work together. By focusing on the shared goals of sustainable development, food security, and climate resilience, this model demonstrates the power of setting aside differences to achieve progress benefiting all parties and the wider world.

The extension of the SRBVA model to Saipan, powered by Chinese technology, Sri Lankan experience, and Saipanese commitment, offers a chance to create a replicable blueprint for sustainable development within island communities. Success in Saipan can inspire islands globally, showcasing the power of data-driven empowerment, knowledge exchange, market access, and inclusive collaboration in the pursuit of the SDGs. China, Sri Lanka, and Saipan share a complex historical legacy. Saipan was a major battleground during World War II, while during the same era, the China-Burma-India Command of the Allies was headquartered in Chongqing, which now spearheads the One Million SRBVA initiative in China.

Moreover, the headquarters of the Southeast Asia Command was located in Ceylon. This collaborative initiative to extend the SRBVA model to Saipan represents an opportunity to transform the legacy of the past. It will strengthen the shared vision of peace, prosperity, and sustainable development for all.

ing cooperation with Sri Lanka on the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and strengthen collaboration on poverty alleviation. When he called on Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, Dr. Yuan Jiajun assured that, "China is willing to join hands with the Sri Lankan side at all levels to push to a new level the bilateral strategic cooperative partnership featuring sincere mutual assistance and lasting friendship." "Sri Lanka and China are a model for friendly coexistence and win-win relations between countries with different systems," he added.

Dr. Yuan appreciated the government's steadfast efforts to stabilize Sri Lanka's economy amid challenging circumstances. He expressed optimism and confidence in the country's future economic growth trajectory.

The Prime Minister, pointing out that China is a great friend of Sri Lanka, thanked the Chinese side for providing strong support for the country's economic and social development over the years. The Prime Minister requested the delegation to share Chongqing's experience of successfully alleviating poverty and ensuring food security by using hybrid rice and other food crops to increase production by several times.

Sri Lanka holds a unique position in this collaboration. As both an established partner of China and a nation maintaining cordial ties with the USA, Sri Lanka has the potential to act as a