Dear Mr. Chairman,

Greetings at a difficult moment for both Sri Lanka and China.

I write this open letter to bring into your good attention that it is very unfortunate to read 3 irresponsible articles on the Daily Mirror (27/3 and 8/4) and the Sunday Times (22/3): One on “Hard Talk” echoes an old American pettifogger from the administration of Ronald Reagan with his brain still in the Cold War era, shouting and instigating that “Sri Lanka must ensure China is held accountable”. One on the front page of the Mirror endorsed this absurd request and highlighted with China “did not take steps to prevent it from spreading to the world, must take full responsibility for the spread of the virus in Sri Lanka and other countries”. The other Editorial “Sunday Punch” insists to use “Wuhan
COVID”, claims the Chinese “gave birth to the virus” and stirs up Sri Lanka should “demand compensation from China” for “allowing the virus to escape from its land”.

It is of no surprise to see some one, either blinded by misinformation or driven by different agenda, keep making groundless remarks. But how could it be accepted and tolerated for the Wijeya Newspapers, a most reputed and respected media group in Sri Lanka to publish these non-senses and hatred speeches on two of her most popular papers? During last couple of days, quite a few friends, no matter from China or Sri Lanka, approached the Embassy to show their disagreement and resentment against the articles. We also witnessed that dozens of netizens commented on website and shake their heads. They joined us for the same question: What is going wrong?

These articles, lack of basic facts, knowledge and compassion, full of prejudice, racism and hatred speech, are not only obviously against the Vision of Wijeya Newspapers of being “the most independent and socially responsible” as well as its Mission of “to report the facts as they are”, but also totally against common sense and humanity. Especially under current situation when both Sri Lanka and China are fighting all their best together against COVID-19, a common enemy of human kind, these stigma and discrimination are absolutely inappropriate and not helpful whatsoever.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

We would like to reiterate that the origin of the novel coronavirus is a
matter of science, which requires professional and scientific assessment. Although Wuhan city in China first reported the outbreak, there is no evidence that it is the source. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the season flu starting from September 2019 has so far killed more than 20,000, and CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield admitted that post-mortem confirmed some actually died of COVID-19. Similar early cases were also found in Italy. Research by scientists from China, Japan, the United States, Europe as well as the World Health Organization have shown no certain conclusion yet on the origin. How could we stigmatize "China gave birth to the virus" without professional medical knowledge?

More importantly, there is a clear consensus and practice by WHO and the international community that a virus should not be linked to any specific country, region or ethnic group, and such stigmatization should be rejected. In the fight against COVID-19, WHO has consistently called on the international community to respect science and respond rationally, and all the governments to educate the public the correct disease naming. WHO has also stressed that any discriminatory practices should be condemned, the use of "China" and "Wuhan" naming the virus by some media must be corrected. UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged "it is shameful to see increasing acts of racial discrimination and prejudice as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic" and "we must always fight racism and prejudice".

After the outbreak was reported, Chinese government has timely adopted the most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures, to prevent and
control the epidemic in an open, transparent and responsible manner. A comprehensive, transparent and detailed timeline of China's efforts has also been released recently. Since January 3, China has been regularly notifying WHO and relevant countries about the outbreak. On January 12, China had already shared with WHO the genetic sequence of the novel coronavirus, fastest in epidemiological history. Since January 23, China made decisive decision to lock down Wuhan with its 11 million population, which may have prevented 700,000 cases of coronavirus according to the Nature journal. All outbound tourist groups were canceled to prevent the spread of the epidemic across the borders. The WHO appraised China has offered a precious window period for the world to fight the epidemic with its huge sacrifices. Singapore, the Republic of Korea, etc have made full use of the time window and taken necessary measures to stem the spread. But it is very regrettable for some other administrations wasted the time China bought, and a big shame for some politicians and media trying to deflect their responsibilities by discrediting China. These stigmatization have ignored the huge sacrifices of the Chinese people, and vilified China's full strength contributions to global public health security. For those who shouting to hold China accountable, please ask themselves if the outbreak first happened in their countries, would they be able to do better and control the pandemic in two months?

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka is a Chinese national, no doubt about it. But we should not forget that this Chinese lady came to Sri Lanka before Wuhan lockdown on 23 January, being not aware of her
condition. After the breakout, the Embassy immediately warned all the Chinese tourists and workers in the Island to examine their health condition and report on a daily basis. Through this timely intervention, she was filtered by the Embassy and her group as a suspicious case, reported to IDH and then confirmed on 27 January. We also requested all Chinese nationals including diplomats of the Embassy to self-quarantine for minimum 14 days strictly in their apartments after entering Sri Lanka. Only thanks to all these concrete measures, among thousands of students, businessmen and workers returned from China to Sri Lanka after the outbreak, there is no a single infection or transmission. For the following 180+ cases (as of 7 April), none of them is Chinese or from China. Ironically, some virus carriers from other countries hid their travel record, broke from self-isolation, and forced thousand of innocent people to be quarantined.

I would also like to bring into your attention that, from the very beginning until to date, the Embassy keeps updating the pandemic situation and all our prevention & control measures to the Sri Lankan government especially the Health Ministry, which are very helpful for our Sri Lankan colleagues to make their decisions according to the health department. Besides the experience sharing, huge amount of medical supplies have also been donated by the central and local Chinese government, enterprises, organizations and the overseas Chinese in Sri Lanka. According to our incomplete statistics, at least 500,000 masks, 41,000 test kits, 15,000 PPE, 130,000 medical gloves have been or ready to be gifted from China to the front line medical workers and other friends across the island to meet their most urgent need. We will provide more assistance
within our capacity, because we won’t forget all the solidarity and support extended by all sectors of Sri Lankan society to China when we were fighting COVID-19 at the darkest moment.

**Dear Mr. Chairman,**

COVID-19 is no longer a battle of one city or one country. It has already become the biggest challenge for all human kinds after WWII. Although we’re still in heavy difficulties, the Chinese Government has extended numerous assistance to almost 100 countries, including sharing diagnosis and treatment experiences, dispatching medical teams and providing all kinds of medical supplies. I firmly believe that this war could be won, but only with joint efforts of all countries despite political, religious and cultural differences. I’m also confident you will agree with me that all our media including the Wijeya Newspapers should play a more responsible and constructive role in this war closely related to the future of our countries and the whole humanity.

Best wishes and good health to you, your family and all members of the Wijeya Newspapers.

Luo Chong
Spokesperson and Chief of Political Section  
Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Sri Lanka