

World News

China Focus: Young Chinese stay home, enjoy lunar New Year holiday online as attitudes change

Xinhua—Some young Chinese have chosen to spend the week-long Chinese Lunar New Year holiday at home. They shop online, send virtual greetings to relatives and friends, and even enjoy virtual fireworks.

The new practices, which are in stark contrast with traditional customs, have sparked controversy.

Traditionally, Spring Festival was a time for reunion of family, relatives and friends, as well as an opportunity to visit temple fairs to buy new clothes and traditional headwear.

"In can remember Spring Festival being the most important festive event that brought a sense of happiness to Chinese people. But nowadays, the holiday brings few surprises. I usually feel tired during the week and would rather stay at home," said 24-year-old Li Ying, who works at a state-owned company in Guiyang, capital city of southwest China's Guizhou province.

"As people's living standards have improved, the sense of satisfaction traditional festive customs bring to Chinese people has faded," said netizen "Yudanfengqing"

in an online posting.

"Why not stay at home to surf the Internet? You can still show affection for family members and relatives with online communication, and you can slash costs," the netizen added.

"The online fair and shopping online for the festival are closely related to stronger consumption," Zhang Jibo, a teacher with Huazhong Normal University in Wuhan, capital city of central China's Hubei province, said.

Some Shanghai media reports ascribed the practice of online festive activities, popular among Chinese aged 25 to 35, to the small size of modern Chinese families and their weak sense of participation.

Zhang Lingling, from Mudanjiang city in northeast China's Heilongjiang province, told Xinhua Monday that since she had worked outside her hometown for many years, she have become estranged to many of her hometown relatives and friends.

"Calling on relatives make me feel exhausted now," she said.

"Most Chinese born between the 1970s and 1990s belong to the only-child generation. They have

been influenced by cyber space and have had their will to communicate face-to-face weakened," said Zhai Li, professor at Northwest A&F University in Yangling, northwest China's Shaanxi province.

Li Ying, the 24-year old working in Guiyang, said that more than anything else, the lunar New Year holiday should be a time for relaxation.

"We stay at home with our family members and feel at ease. That's enough for a holiday," she said.

According to statistics from Taobao.com, China's biggest online retail site, transaction volume in Spring Festival special goods exceeded 1 billion yuan (146.6 million U.S. dollars) in January alone, much higher than the 280 million yuan a year earlier.

Zhang Jibo noted that Spring Festival traditions have accompanied the Chinese people for thousands of years. And while it is necessary for the younger generation to make efforts to conserve this traditional Spring Festival culture, new ways of enjoying the Spring Festival can also be explored, Zhang added.

The Lunar New Year began Feb. 14.

Taiwan leader expects economic pact with mainland to make Taiwan more competitive

Xinhua—Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou said Monday that the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with the mainland is aimed to help Taiwanese people to do business and boost the island's competitiveness.

Ma made the remarks in Taoyuan, a northwestern county of the island, at a gathering to mark the Chinese Spring Festival, or Lunar New Year.

The ECFA is a wide-ranging economic pact for further normalizing trade and investment ties across the Taiwan Strait, which Ma hopes to sign with the mainland this year to help fuel Taiwan's economic revival.

Tariff reduction would promote the sales of goods from Taiwan to the mainland, which will benefit both the Taiwanese businesses and the foreign-funded businesses in Taiwan, Ma said.

This will help Taiwan to introduce more foreign investment and grant the island an opportunity to become a hub of economy and trade in the Asia-Pacific region, he said.

As the mainland is Taiwan's biggest trade partner, the pact will certainly do more

good than harm, Ma said.

Ma also attended an ancestor worship ceremony in Majiazhuang, Miaoli County on Monday and said that the ancestors of him and local residents moved from Fufengtang, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, to the island some 2,000 years ago.

He also spoke optimistically of the economy situation and expected an economic growth of 4 percent in Taiwan this year.

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Chun plans to ask government and law enforcement officials—who have a definite interest in getting accurate Census counts—to help promote the Census and dispel fears of 287(g) by publicly reinforcing the message that Census information is confidential, and sharing Census information violates federal law.

"Asians especially have a tendency not to be involved—even those with citizen status sometimes don't vote—which means we don't have power. We have to participate in the Census so the government can allocate more funding to our community; but in order to have participation the Governor and other officials have to really inform people that there is no risk. Of course, when the Governor mentions it, people will listen more," Chun said.

Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison said that his department has no access to any Census information. Wake County has been participating in 287(g) since July of 2008.

"We don't have the task force model where deputies and law enforcement ask if people are legal. We only ask people once they come into our jail. If you report a crime and you're illegal, we don't ask you. The way we look at it, if you have committed a crime, you've introduced yourself to us. For the average person out there, no, we don't ask those questions," Harrison said. "Census information is strictly confidential, and no one can get to it anyway.

Terry Ao, director of Voting and Census programs

at AAJC, said that although she can understand the fear of relaying personal information in the Census, the protections to Census data are some of the strongest in the nation.

"Local law enforcement would have no access to the Census information," she said, adding that according to Title 13, the law under which Census data is protected, Census employees who have access to the data are sworn for life to keep it confidential, facing up to five years in jail and a \$250,000 fine or both for disclosure.

In its newly released assessment of the Census Bureau's outreach to Asian Americans, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund is generally positive. However, AALDEF is seeking further accommodations to ensure confidentiality of Census information, including more details about enforcement and specific procedures safeguarding confidentiality and a moratorium on immigration raids. AALDEF said the Bureau has failed to respond to its concerns so far.

In 2009 Wake County processed 1981 inmates for deportation, and only six were from Asian countries, including two from China. Almost 30 percent of the charges that brought people to jail were non-DWI traffic offenses. According to ICE, more than 1,000 local officers have been trained across the United States, and more than 130,000 illegal immigrants have been identified since 2006.

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The agreement with Hanban is not the first for CIU, which has set up over 45 partnerships between North Carolina schools and schools in Jiangsu province in China as well as Mexico and Denmark. The partnerships have included collaborative lessons, and in the summer of 2009, principals and teachers from 12 North Carolina schools visited partner schools in Jiangsu province.

The director of Hanban, Xu Lin, is scheduled to visit the state in April.

"Americans have gotten along without learning a lot of languages, but it's important that we do, and we've got to change that. We think this is a real opportunity and [Hanban] is very supportive of this, and we look forward to working with them and welcoming Madame Xu." Fiske said.

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