Chinese New Year

Hello everyone. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening.

My name is Bin Gong and I’m from Agency Security Lending China development team. I’m so glad to have the opportunity to share the Chinese New Year and introduce the China team.

Chinese New Year 2023 is the year of Rabbit, and naturally, Year 2023 animal sign is Rabbit(兔年). I’m sure you want to know why it’s Rabbit and is there any other animal. Sure, let me introduce the Chinese Zodiac.

The old Chinese zodiac has been with us for almost two thousand years, and is similar to the 12 constellations [ˌkɒnstə'leɪʃən] in the West, both of which are related to the mysterious [mɪ'stɪəriəs] number 12. There are just 12 lunar cycles in a calendar year.

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The Chinese zodiac is based on a repeating 12-year cycle, an

approximation [əˌprɒksɪ'meɪʃn] to the 11.86-year cycle of Jupiter. Later, ancient people developed 12 earthly branches to keep track of years. For convenience, personality is mainly determined by the characteristics of animals. The mysterious connection between the 12 animals and people has become a permanent subject. So the 12 animals appear in turn and represent each year.

## Why are all the 12 Chinese zodiacs animals?

In ancient times, people's life was depended on animals. On the one hand, they had to hide and resist attacks from animals and felt awe [ɔː] of animals. On the other hand, they had to kill animals to get food. The ancients believed that animals had the same thoughts, feelings and souls as human beings, so they worshipped animals. This belief influenced the selection of the twelve Chinese zodiacs.

## Why didn't cat get a position in the Chinese zodiac system?

Cats were domesticated very late in China. Before the Han Dynasty **['daɪnəsti]** , there were only wild cats. Their relationship with human beings was not close. By the time that the Chinese people began to raise domesticated cats, the 12 Chinese zodiacs had been well established.

**Dates and Calendar**

Chinese New Year date is different every year. Generally speaking, it distributes between January 21st and February 22nd. Chinese Lunar Calendar is different from the Gregorian calendar, so the New Year dates on the two calendars are different.

According to the Chinese Lunar Calendar, there are big years and small years. In big years, there can be up to 384 days, but in small years, there can be only 355 days. During the big years, the Chinese New Year date moves to late February, but during the small years, it goes back to late January. That is the reason why the date has a range of 32 days.

The Lunar Calendar has been running for over 4000 years. The lunar calendar was developed according to the movement of the moon and is closely related to farming activities.

### New Year's Eve On Chinese New Year's Eve or Lunar New Year's Eve, there is a big and elaborate family dinner (also called the 'reunion dinner') which all family members are expected to come home for, regardless of where they live. It is the most important meal of the entire year for everyone to reunite and catch up ahead of the week-long festivities still to come.

### The first day

Welcome the gods of the heavens and earth; Visit families (especially those older than yourself) and friends to pass on New Year's wishes for the forth coming year.

### On the second day

Chinese people worship their ancestors as well as tutelary **['tjuːtɪlərɪ]** deities **['deɪəti]** of people with the same surname organised into lineage societies in ancestral shrines.

### The third and fourth days

Married Women will come back to their parents' home with the husband and children to pay New Year visits and extend New Year greetings

### On the 15th day

The Lantern Festival (元宵节) is the last day of the Chinese New Year celebration. This day is for the last moment for setting off fireworks, the last excuse for eating a big feast and the last chance for family getting together before the new year celebrations are over. People celebrate the Lantern Festival by eating Sweet Dumplings, making and displaying lanterns.

**Dust Sweep**

Dust Sweep normally starts on the 24th day of the 12th lunar month. The word “dust” in Chinese is a homophone **['hɑːməfoʊn]** for “old” and that is why cleaning the house is symbolic for driving away bad luck from the previous year and to allow for good luck to come in.

## Paste the Chinese Character of Fu on the Door

It is traditional for every family to paste the character “Fu" on their doors during the Spring Festival. “Fu” means happiness and fortune. Many people paste the character upside down, as upside down happiness in Chinese sounds the same as “happiness arrives”.

## New Year Lucky Money

During New Year, the elders give the younger generation luck money, which is auspicious **[ɔː'spɪʃəs]** and meant to drive out evil spirits carries the hope of the elders for the younger generation to be healthy and free of troubles in the New Year. In China red symbolizes good luck, so the lucky money is usually wrapped red paper, also nicknamed a " red envelope”.

## Performing Lion-dance and Dragon-dance

Lion-dance and dragon-dance is the traditional dance in China, usually performed at Chinese traditional festivals such as Chinese New Year or important occasions **[ə'keɪʒn]** such as business opening events.

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The lion and dragon symbolize **['sɪmbəlaɪz]** power in Chinese culture. People believe that performing lion-dance and dragon-dance can scare away evil spirits and bring good fortune.

## Paper-cuts for Window Decoration [ˌdekə'reɪʃn]

Paper-cuts are a traditional folk art for window decorations in China. In the old days, people all over China would put paper-cuts on their windows to celebrate Chinese New Year. The patterns usually portray **[pɔːr'treɪ]**  harvests or abundance  **[ə'bʌndəns]**  to express their hope for a better life while adding to the festive atmosphere.

## Spring Festival Couplets and New Year’s Paintings

Peach planks were the predecessor **['predəsesər]**  of Spring Festival Couplets. People made two wooden planks from peach trees, writing down the names of the gods and hanging them on doors as protection. Later, the planks evolved **[i'vɑːlv]**  into pieces of red paper bearing auspicious **[ɔː'spɪʃəs]** words. They are called Spring Festival couplets.

New Folk Customs

Celebrating Chinese New Year has evolved over the past years with the rapid development of technology as well as Chinese people's constantly changing understanding of traditional culture and entertainment.

Grab digital red envelopes

Grabbing and sending red envelopes on WeChat is a fun and rewarding experience during the festival, as it is a good way to experience Chinese culture and maintain relationships with Chinese young people.

Collect five ‘Fu’ cards

If you see someone stop in front of a Chinese character 福 (Fu) and raise his phone, don't be surprised – he is collecting five virtual “Fu” cards in Alipay. Each ‘Fu’ card represents a different blessing. Once you successfully collect all the five different types of Fu, you can split a 200-million-yuan prize with the other participants. The five cards can be accessed by using your phone to scan “Fu”, which means ‘good luck’, and a range of other methods such as playing the “Ant Forest Game”.

There are several common delicious foods in the Chinese New Year.

## Dumplings

Chinese people eat Jiaozi(饺子) on New Year’s Eve, people who eats the Jiaozi with coin or some special ingredient **[ɪn'ɡriːdiənt]**  will be the luckiest. The shape of dumplings resembles **[rɪ'zembl]**  ancient Chinese gold ingots **['ɪŋɡəts]**  so they are a good omen **['oʊmən]** of prosperity **[prɑː'sperəti]**  .

## Chinese New Year Cake

Nian Gao, which translates as "New Year Cake", sounds like 年高, which means an increasingly prosperous year. There are many styles of Nian Gao around China, of which our favorite are the Cantonese **[ˌkæntə'niːz]** style, which is sweetened **['sweɪtənd]** with brown sugar and steamed in a round cake, and Shanghainese style, which is often sliced and stir-fried with pork and cabbage.

## Sweet Dumplings

Yuan Xiao (also known as sweet dumplings) are balls of glutinous **['ɡluːtənəs]**  rice flour cooked and served in a light sugar syrup **['sɪrəp]**. They may be large or small, filled ( with sesame **['sesəmi]** , peanuts or red bean paste ) or unfilled. Yuanxiao literally means “first evening”, referring to the first full moon after New Year, when Lantern Festival is held.

## Reunion dinner

If one were to choose only one day of Chinese New Year festival to go home to visit family, this would be it. The daytime before the reunion dinner (and immediately preceding days if the journey home is longer) see the most crowded roads, bus stations, train stations, and airports of the whole year, as everyone anxiously makes the journey to go home and be with their loved ones.

The dinner is believed to be the most important part of the festival and the most important meal of the year. Big families of several generations sit around round tables and enjoy the food and time together. The number of dishes must be even, like 10, 12, 16, 18, because odd ones are considered ominous.

As a family, we have the reunion lunch after everyone back to work for BBQ.

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## Spring festival Travel Rush

Usually the public holiday for the Chinese Year New is 5 days but most people take more than that. That’s because of the Spring festival travel Rush, it’s a phenomenon **[fə'nɑːmɪnən]**  of large-scale high traffic pressure and congestion that occurs around the Chinese New Year. It usually occurs about 15 days before and 25 days after the Spring Festival. During this period, the number of people returning home and going out increased, and the number of tourists across the country continued to rise. The flow of family visits, students, migrant workers, and

tourism **['tʊrɪzəm]**  superimposed  **[sjuːpərɪm'poʊzd]**, resulting in traffic congestion **[kən'dʒestʃən]**. China Central Television described the Spring festival travel Rush as a "rare phenomenon of population movement in the world", and claimed to be "the largest population migration on the earth".  For 2023, After the Chinese government optimizes the anti-epidemic policy, the Ministry of Transport claims that the passenger flow during the Spring Festival travel reached approximately 2.1 billion.

Actually, we also suffered the pain. There are two sites for China team, Shanghai and Dalian. Per to the map, you can find that we have the members need to across 1,800KM from Dalian to their hometown. Even more, they may cross half of China about 2,200KM from shanghai to Heilongjiang province.

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## It is a festival for 1/4 of the world's population

The world’s population will be about 8 billion for New Year 2023, and over 2 billion celebrate it in some way.

## The Chinese New Year date changes each year.

The date for Chinese New Year changes each year. It always falls between January 21 and February 20 and is determined by the Chinese lunar calendar. In 2021, Chinese New Year falls on Friday, February 12th.

## Every Chinese New Year starts a new animal's zodiac year.

There are 12 Chinese zodiac animals. In order, the 12 animals are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.

## It is the longest Chinese holiday.

Chinese New Year, is the longest and most important holiday for Chinese people. It is usually celebrated from the eighth day of the twelfth month to the fifteenth of the first month (lantern festival), by Chinese lunar calendar.

## No haircuts for a month

Getting haircuts is one taboo **[tə'buː]** for the Chinese New Year.  Getting Haircuts is strongly discouraged during the first lunar month as it is believed that this will bring bad luck to your maternal uncles. And most hair salons stay closed for the month. The reason dates back to the Qing Dynasty. The Han Chinese were forced to shave the front of their heads, and they would say ‘remember the old days when we didn’t have to get a haircut at the start of each year’. The words for ‘remember the old days’ sound similar to the words for ‘dead uncle’.

## The earliest firecrackers were made with bamboo.

In ancient times, firecrackers were made by burning 竹（ bamboo） in a fire. The firecrackers were called “爆竹” because they made a "puff puff puff" sound. After the advent of gunpowder, people filled the bamboo tube with saltpeter, sulfur **['sʌlfə]**, and charcoal **['tʃɑːrkoʊl]**  to burn, resulting in a "爆竹". In the Song Dynasty, Han people began to use paper tubes to wrap gunpowder into strings to make "firecrackers"

As mentioned, we have people from different areas of China. They have different customs and stories for the Chinese New Year. Fiona, will you start your sharing?

At last, let’s end up with a fireworks show on the Lantern festival in Dalian. Quote from a Chinese poet, “We are all like fireworks. We climb, shine and always go our separate ways and become further apart. But even if that time comes, let's not disappear like a firework, and continue to shine... forever.”