

CHINA NOW to foster greater understanding between China and UK through largest ever cultural celebration

HSBC CHINA NOW survey highlights lack of knowledge between Chinese and British people

CHINA NOW - the UK's largest ever festival of Chinese culture - will go live in February 2008 to coincide with the start of the Chinese New Year and continue to the end of July 2008, and the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

With over 800 events across the UK, this celebration of a vibrant, dynamic and fast-evolving nation will showcase the very best aspects of modern Chinese society and culture, and offer an insight into its history.

CHINA NOW will include partnerships with many of the UK's best known cultural institutions and begin with a nationwide celebration marking the start of the Chinese New Year.

The festival will encompass art, design, cuisine and culture, science, business and technology, education and sport as well as forge international connections and greater understanding between the two nations. At the heart of the festival will be an extensive educational programme.

British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, commented:

"I welcome **CHINA NOW** as a valuable and exciting idea to help bring our countries closer together and further develop and strengthen our relationship."

CHINA NOW has received high recognition and support from the government of the People's Republic of China.

Premier of the People's Republic of China, Wen Jiabao, added:

"**CHINA NOW** will strengthen the understanding and friendship between China and the UK. We must work together to make the festival a success."

Madame Fu Ying, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in the UK, noted:

"I believe **CHINA NOW** has a very positive purpose as it seeks to advance the UK public's understanding of contemporary China."

HSBC Group Chairman Stephen Green said:

"Between the Chinese New Year celebrations next February and the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, the UK will be bringing together a festival of celebrations showcasing the very best of modern China."

The HSBC CHINA NOW survey - published today - reveals the surprising lack of understanding that people of the two countries have of each other's cultures.

The research was commissioned by HSBC, a principal sponsor of CHINA NOW. The results clearly illustrate the need for CHINA NOW to undertake an educational role - explaining the nature of contemporary Chinese culture to a UK audience.

According to the survey:

- A quarter (24%) of Chinese respondents could name Gordon Brown as current British Prime Minister (although 22% still thought it was Tony Blair) whereas only 7% of UK respondents correctly identified Hu Jintao as President of China. More than half (54%), of UK respondents could not name a single Chinese politician
- Few UK and Chinese citizens have experienced each other's cultures at first hand. Only 5% of UK and 6% of Chinese respondents have visited China and Britain respectively
- UK respondents most closely associated Chairman Mao (55%), Jackie Chan (48%) and Confucius (34%) with China. By comparison, Prince William (41%), David Beckham (40%) and The Queen (36%) were the personalities best associated with the UK by Chinese respondents
- Among UK respondents, China was best known for its food (45%), its economy (35%) and its links with Hong Kong (31%). In contrast, for the Chinese, Britain was famous for football (52%), the royal family (33%) and for its capital, London (30%)
- In popular culture, 23% of Chinese respondents associated Harry Potter with the UK ahead of James Bond (11%), The Beatles (10%), Oasis (9%) and Alexander McQueen (5%)
- 26% of UK respondents bizarrely associated sumo wrestling with China.

Note to Editors:

1. CHINA NOW is an independently funded, non-profit organisation which aims to build partnerships between artists, cultural leaders, schools, businesses and communities across UK and China
2. CHINA NOW was conceived by the UK business community and is chaired by Stephen Green, Group Chairman of HSBC Holdings plc. Alan Parker and James Hughes-Hallett are Vice Chairmen and Simon Heale is the Chief Executive
3. The full schedule of events within the CHINA NOW programme will be unveiled in January 2008
4. CHINA NOW has the following corporate sponsors; Cathay Pacific, Ping An of China, The Times, InterContinental Hotels Group, China Tang, KPMG, WPP, Brunswick Group, Jardine Matheson Group, Dickson Concepts, Lenovo, Norton Rose, Arts Council England, Standard Chartered, The Swire Group, Henderson Land, PricewaterhouseCoopers, HSBC, HenDi Group
5. The HSBC CHINA NOW survey was commissioned by HSBC and carried out by Ipsos MORI in July and August 2007. Comparable questions were asked of 1811 respondents in the UK and 1930 respondents in China
6. The CHINA NOW website can be viewed at www.chinanow.org.uk

Release date: 6 September 2007